The Donovan Affair

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By OWEN DAVIS

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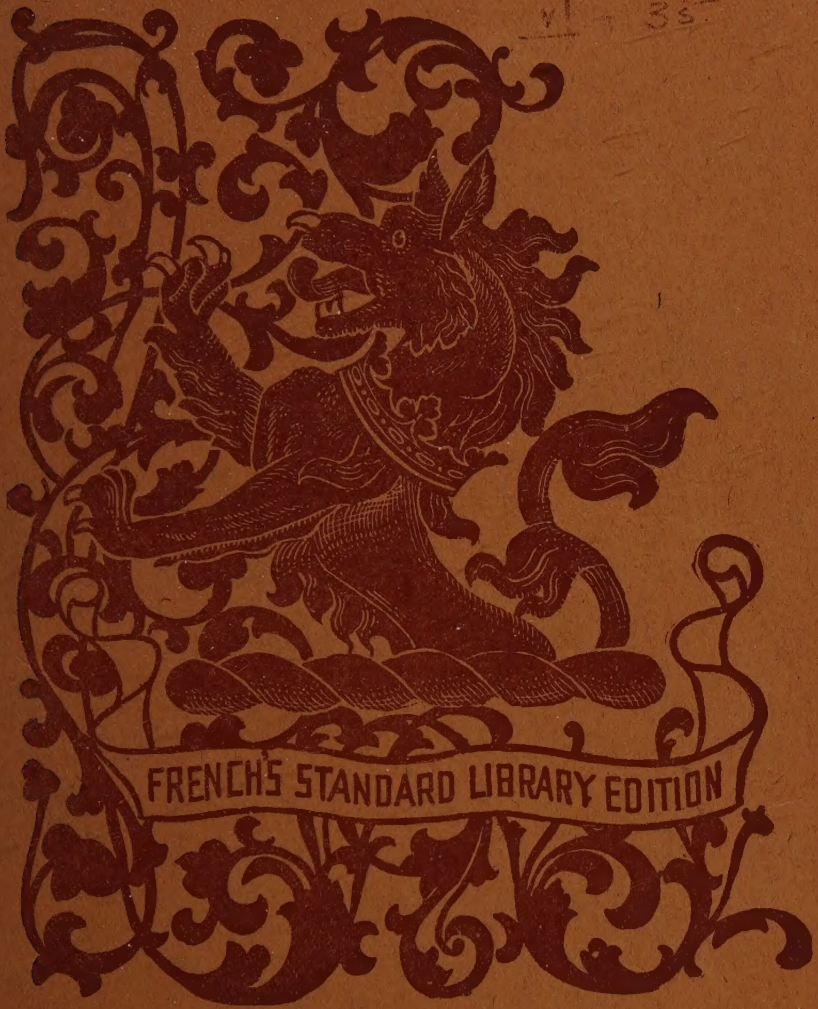

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SAMUEL FRENCH, 25 West 45th Street, New ity
Our New Descriptive Catalogue Sent Free on I

THE DONOVAN AFFAIR

A Play in Three Acts

BY

OWEN DAVIS

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THE DONOVAN AFFAIR

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The following is a copy of program of the first performance of "THE DONOVAN AFFAIR", as produced at the Fulton Theatre, New York, August 30, 1926:

ALBERT LEWIS

In Association with

DONALD DAVIS

Presents

"THE DONOVAN AFFAIR"

Drama in Three Acts

By Owen Davis

CAST OF CHARACTERS

CARNEY	*Joseph Robison*
JOHN KILLAIN	*Paul Harvey*
JEAN RANKIN	*Miriam Doyle*
DAVID CORNISH	*Niles Welch*
LYDIA RANKIN	*Eleanor Woodruff*
PETER RANKIN	*Robert T. Haines*
BEN HOLT	*Chas. C. Wilson*
ANNE HOLT	*Renita Randolph*
RUTH LINSEY	*Phoebe Foster*
NEIL LINSEY	*Robert Hudson*
HORACE CARTER	*Edwin Stanley*
NELSON	*Ray Collins*
MARY	*Georgie Lee Hall*
PROFESSOR DONOVAN	*Edwin Maxwell*
MRS. DOWD	*Merle Stanton*
DR. MORRIS	*Frank Taylor*
ROBERTS	*Jefferson Hall*

ACTS I, II and III.—In the Library of Peter Rankin's Home in Westchester.

THE DONOVAN AFFAIR

Produced at the Duke of York's Theatre, St. Martin's Lane, London, W.C., on Tuesday, February 15th, 1927, with the following cast of characters:

(In the order of their appearance.)

CARNEY	*Paul Neville.*
JOHN KILLIAN	*Fred Groves.*
JEAN RANKIN	*Dorothy Dix.*
DAVID CORNISH	*Brue Belfrage.*
LYDIA RANKIN	*Amy Brandon Thomas.*
PETER RANKIN	*James Carew.*
BEN HOLT	*Lawrence Ireland.*
ANNE HOLT	*Iris Darbyshire.*
RUTH LINSEY	*Dorothy Tetley.*
NEIL LINSEY	*Leslie Perrins.*
HORACE CARTER	*Leslie Harding.*
NELSON	*Franklyn Bellamy.*
MARY	*Mary Grew.*
PROFESSOR DONOVAN	*Charles Vane.*
ROBERTS	*Paul Chalfont.*
MRS. DOWD	*Ethel Stalman.*
DR. MORRIS	*Basil Burleigh.*

The Play produced by ALBERT DE COURVILLE.

CHARACTERS

JOHN KILLIAN . . .	Inspector of Police. A straightforward man of 45, a man of some strength of character.
CARNEY	A policeman.
JEAN RANKIN . . .	A girl of 20. Juvenile part with love story.
DAVID CORNISH . . .	Juvenile.
LYDIA RANKIN . . .	A handsome woman of 35, strong acting part.
PETER RANKIN . . .	Character part; a rather vain and pompous man of 50.
BEN HOLT	Straight juvenile.
ANNE HOLT . . .	Juvenile. A bride.
RUTH LINSEY . . .	Strong acting part, a woman of 27, to be played with a touch of character—a nervous, terrified woman.
NEIL LINSEY . . .	Character heavy.
NELSON	A servant, really the acting part of the play, a man of 30.
MARY	A servant, young and pretty, with some strong acting scenes.
PROFESSOR DONOVAN . .	University professor, a man of 60, strength and dignity.
ROBERTS	A policeman.
HORACE CARTER . .	Can double Roberts.

SCENE

Peter Rankin's Library.

ACT I.—8 p.m.

ACT II.—8.30 p.m.

ACT III.—Midnight.

THE DONOVAN AFFAIR

ACT I

SCENE.—PETER RANKIN'S Library.

The library is a handsome room in the home of a family of wealth and culture. There is a door to hall at back R., *a door down* L. *open, and a window at* R. *well down stage, the curtains of which are open.*

(*For furniture, etc., see Ground Plan of Scene.*)

(*At rise of* CURTAIN *a loud conversation is heard off stage, definite lines with* PETER RANKIN'S *voice heard in conversation with* JOHN KILLIAN *and other guests.*)

Off stage talking of all characters for a minute.

Then CARNEY, *a young police-officer, opens the door at back and enters and looks about, crosses* R., *sees door* L., *crosses and closes it. The off-stage chatter stops.* CARNEY *turns and exits* C. *shutting the door behind him. In a moment the door is again opened and* CARNEY *re-enters; he is followed as far as the open door by* KILLIAN.

CARNEY. This ought to do, Inspector.

KILLIAN (*enters and looks about*). Put on the lights, Carney.

(CARNEY *switches on lights and exits, this time leaving the door open.*)

(KILLIAN *crosses over to French window* R. *and draws the curtains, then pulls a chair under a standard lamp at* R., *and lights the lamp, and stands for a moment looking at it with a smile. He then crosses to library desk up* R., *and opens the desk, and finds a pen and some writing-paper. As he arranges these on the desk,* CARNEY *again enters.*)

CARNEY. All right, Inspector.

KILLIAN. All right! You get back to the doctor!

CARNEY (*going to door* L. *and beckoning to the guests to enter*). All right, this way, please.

(JEAN RANKIN, DAVID CORNISH, LYDIA RANKIN, PETER RANKIN, BEN HOLT, ANNE HOLT, RUTH LINSEY, NEIL LINSEY, HORACE

CARTER, NELSON *and* MARY. (NELSON *and* MARY *are house servants, all the others are ladies and gentlemen in dinner dress.*) *All of these persons are uneasy and greatly distressed, and it is evident that they are under a deep emotion.*)

KILLIAN (C., *turns to others*). Sit down, please, all of you. (*One or two of the group sit.*)

(CARNEY *exits* C.)

PETER (*standing* C. *to* R.). Isn't your tone of authority just a little absurd, Mr. Killian? After all, this is my house and——

KILLIAN (*sternly*). Just a minute!

LYDIA. It has been dreadful for all of us! Such a fearful experience! We are more than anxious, Mr. Killian, to assist you in every way.

PETER. But I resent the tone of——

JEAN (*impatiently*). Please, father!

(*The door opens and* CARNEY *re-enters.*)

KILLIAN (*to him*). Well—— How about it? What does the doctor say?

CARNEY (*moving down to* KILLIAN *at* C.). The boy is dead!

NEIL. Good God!

JEAN. Oh—poor Jack! (*She covers her face.*)

(*All of the others are profoundly moved and shocked.*)

KILLIAN. Well! (*Looking round at the group of shocked and frightened people.*) It's murder, then!

PETER. In my house! (*Sitting.*)

RUTH (*to* NEIL). I'm faint, Neil!

NEIL (*bitterly*). For God's sake don't make a scene!

(ANNE *makes room for* RUTH *on settee* L.)

KILLIAN. Murder!

(BEN *moves to* ANNE.)

ANNE. It doesn't seem possible! Everybody was laughing and talking and——

(*Door* C. *opens and* PROFESSOR DONOVAN *enters.*)

JEAN (*as she sees him, rises and then sits again*). Professor! How can we tell you—— (*Rising and crossing to him.*)

(MARY *and* ROGERS *are up* L. *of the door* C.)

PROFESSOR (*taking* JEAN *to table* R., *and giving a look to* KILLIAN). Please, Jean! (*Stepping up to* KILLIAN C.)

(JEAN *sits again.*)

KILLIAN. I'm Inspector Killian from Police Headquarters, Professor Donovan. I know you, of course, sir.

Professor (c., r. *of* Killian). Who killed my boy? (*He speaks calmly but is evidently making a tremendous effort for self-control.*)

Killian (*with a wave of his hand*). Take a look around you! Whoever did it is here, in this room.

Professor (*turning slowly and looking from one to another*). Old friends and neighbours, all of you.

Killian (*pointing to* Rogers *and* Mary *up* l.). These servants were in the room.

Professor (*seeing* Mary—*moving up* c. *slightly*). I've known Mary, here, since she was a baby, her mother is working for me to this day. Nelson, here, loved my boy!

Killian. But it was one of you! One of the people here!

Lydia (*sitting on settee front of table* r.c.). I am very reluctant to mention it, but isn't it conceivable that he may have done it himself?

Professor (*turning on her*). No. I have seen him.

Killian. I don't pretend to know as much as you do about such things, Professor, but I say the same.

Carney (*at door* c.). The doctor says he couldn't have done it.

Professor (*moving down to* Killian). I was called to the telephone, and told that my son had been injured, not that he was dead.

Killian. Yes, sir, but it's a hard thing to come right out with cold facts.

Professor. Isn't it the fact that is the cruel thing, not the words one dresses it up with? (*Looking about at everyone; they are all nervous and upset.*) Which one of you killed my boy? (*There is no answer.*) Why did you do it? (*There is a pause.*) You must answer! (*With his face buried in his hands, he moves up* c.)

Peter (*rising and crossing to* Professor). Professor Donovan, it seems simply incredible that such a thing could happen here!

Professor. I am going to know all about it.

Killian (*crossing to top of table*). You're the boy's father, you've a right to know! Sit down! (*Sets chair for* Professor *and crosses down* l.c.) I'm going straight to the bottom of this affair! Sit here!

(Professor Donovan *sits at top of table* r.c., Killian *stands down* c. *and frowns at the group in front of him.*)

Now let's have the facts! What happened?

(*They all attempt to speak at once.*)

Wait! Wait! One at a time! You might tell me, Mr. Rankin.

Peter (*rising and crossing to* Killian). I can tell you what I saw, of course, but really I saw very little.

Killian (c. *to* l.). He was killed with a knife?

Peter. Yes. A poultry-knife that was on the table; we were at dinner.

Professor (*suddenly*). Who did it, Rankin? (*Sitting at table, same above.*)

Peter (*troubled, turning*). I don't know.

Killian. Is anyone here ready to answer me in one word, who killed this boy? (*Pause. Looking about but no one answers. Facing up, then moving up slightly.*) Carney!

Carney. Yes.

Killian. There's a "frame up" here, 'phone down for a police matron!

(Carney *exits* C.)

Lydia. Surely you are not accusing any of the ladies here of murder!

Killian (*moving down* L.C.). The boy's dead, that's one thing you can't any of you deny! This time I was lucky enough to get on the job before the whole case was all muddled up! One of you killed young Donovan. I am going to know all about it before anybody goes out of that door—(*pointing to the door* C.)—if we are here all night! (*Persuasively.*) Now, Mr. Rankin, you can tell us the whole thing in your own way.

(*As* Peter *is about to start* Carney *enters; in his hand is a short-bladed game-knife with a handle of highly polished silver.*)

Carney. Here, sir. (*Coming down and giving knife to* Inspector.)

(Peter *advances to look at knife and crosses to* L.)

Killian. Yes. (*Holding up the knife.*) This is the knife he was killed with?

(Professor Donovan *with a quick movement hides his face with his hands.* Killian, *putting knife on table, places his hand kindly on* Professor Donovan's *shoulder.* Peter *crosses up* L.C.)

Killian. I'm wondering, sir, if it wouldn't be better for you to go?

Professor. No.

Killian (*crossing back to* C.). All right! This knife belongs to you, of course, Mr. Rankin?

Peter. Naturally. It's a poultry-knife from my dining-table. It is my birthday; this affair here to-night was supposed to be in honour of that occasion.

Professor. May I ask a question? (*Rising and crossing to* Killian, C.)

Killian (*crossing* C., *facing to* R.). Well?

Professor (L. *of table*). Who made out the list of dinner guests?

Lydia (*seated on settee* R.C.). I did, of course.

Professor. I notice that you have more gentlemen here than there are ladies. Isn't that rather unusual for so discreet a hostess?

Lydia. I should much prefer to answer that in private.

Killian. This is a serious business! We can't afford to spare anyone's feelings.

PROFESSOR. You made out the list of guests?

LYDIA. I did.

PROFESSOR. You chose them all?

LYDIA. Yes. (*She hesitates.*) That is——

KILLIAN. Well?

LYDIA. You have accidentally touched upon a rather painful and delicate subject, but one I am sure that can't have anything to do with this dreadful thing.

KILLIAN. Let me be the judge of that!

PROFESSOR. Is there anyone present whom you did not invite, or who was invited against your will?

LYDIA (*reluctantly*). Yes.

JEAN (*rising angrily*). She means Mr. Cornish.

DAVID (*at* R. *with* JEAN, *standing behind her chair*). I knew that I wasn't really welcome here. I didn't know it was as bad as that.

KILLIAN (C. *to* LYDIA). You didn't want *him* here?

LYDIA. No.

PROFESSOR. Jean insisted?

LYDIA. Yes.

KILLIAN. And you let him come to please her?

LYDIA. Yes.

JEAN (*bitterly*). To please me! When did you ever try to please me?

LYDIA (*coldly, to* JEAN). To satisfy you, then! To keep you quiet.

KILLIAN. Tell me, Miss Rankin, did your mother——

JEAN. She isn't my mother.

PETER (L.C., *sternly*). Jean!

JEAN. She isn't my mother.

PETER (*to* KILLIAN). Mrs. Rankin is my second wife.

LYDIA. I am devoted to Jean, but, as you all know, the position of a stepmother is a difficult one. Quite naturally we are not always of the same mind.

JEAN. We never agree! We never can!

PETER (*moving to* C., *sternly*). Jean!

JEAN (*moving forward to* PETER, C.). Oh, why don't you let me go away, father? Why didn't you let me go when I begged you to a month ago?

PETER (*embraces* JEAN, *takes her up stage two steps* R.C., *speaking over his shoulder*). She is hysterical! The shock has been too great, we all feel it! It has been too much for all of us.

KILLIAN (L.C., *dryly*). Not for all of you! One of you seems to have kept his head pretty well.

PROFESSOR (R.C., *down a step to* LYDIA). You say Jean insisted Mr. Cornish should be one of the guests?

LYDIA (*still sitting on settee* R.). As a matter of fact she asked him herself against my express command.

PROFESSOR. Why did you do that, Jean? (*Turning to* JEAN.)

Jean. What possible difference can it make, why? (*To* Professor.)

Killian (*sternly*). Now wait a minute! This isn't a game, you know. We're not playing "animal, vegetable, or mineral." You'll answer my questions and Professor Donovan's! All of them! Why did you ask Mr. Cornish here to-night against your mother's wish?

Jean. I have already told you that she isn't my mother, she is a woman only a few years older than I am myself; between us there isn't any pretence of affection, but she still claims authority over me through her position as my father's wife. For the last two months she has continually been forcing me into the company of—of a man I did not want to be with.

Killian. Which man? (*He looks about. Crosses up* C.) I don't know this gentleman. (*He is looking at* Horace Carter, *who is standing behind table* R.)

(Jean *goes* R. *a few steps.*)

Horace (*pleasantly. Rising*). My name is Carter, Horace Carter.

Killian. Married?

Horace (*shaking his head*). No.

Killian. The other gentlemen are, I think. (*Crossing* R.C. *and looking at* Ben Holt.) You're married, aren't you, Mr. Holt?

(Anne *rises, moving slowly up to* Ben.)

Ben. Terribly. (*Looking angrily at* Anne, *who is sobbing against his shoulder.*)

Anne (*sobbing*). The first dinner we've ever been to together. The very first since our wedding.

Killian (*to* Jean). The man you didn't want to be with Miss Rankin? Was it Mr. Carter?

Jean. No.

Professor (*gently*). Jean?

Jean (*crossing to* Professor). Yes, Professor?

Professor (*sadly*). Was it my boy?

Jean (*sitting at* L. *of table next to* Professor, *who sinks into chair above table*). Yes.

Killian (*to* L.C.). Now we're getting somewhere.

Peter (*who has crossed down* L., *turning*). Jack Donovan has been in and out of my house ever since he has been old enough to walk. You know that, Professor.

Professor (R.C. *in front of table*). Yes.

Peter. If there has been any trouble I knew nothing of it.

Jean (*bitterly*). You are a very busy man, father; there have been a number of things going on in this house that you knew nothing about.

Killian (C.). Well, we propose to know all about them. I've had to do with these cases in what they call high society before

that usually means arrogance, insolence and a contempt for the law and its officers.

Peter (*coming nearer to* Killian). It isn't your authority that I resent—it's your tone.

Professor. We want the truth. I have got to know the truth. (*Facing away to* R.)

Killian. And you are going to know it. I've men enough outside, and I've sent for a police matron—I think I can manage to handle the affair.

Peter (*turning and looking coldly at him*). It seems that insolence isn't wholly the prerogative of the upper class.

Killian. When this is over you may make complaints against me if you want to—God knows the files are full of them—but, you'll answer my questions now. Go on, Mr. Rankin.

Peter. I don't know what to say. We were at dinner, there was a great deal of talking and laughter—there had been no trouble of any kind—then this happened, in the moment when the lights were out.

Killian (*turning quickly*). Lights out?

Peter. Yes.

Killian. Why? Who put the lights out?

Nelson (*stepping forward to* L.C.). I did, sir, at Mrs. Rankin's orders.

(*All look at* Nelson.)

Lydia (*still sitting on settee* R.C.). Jack Donovan wore a very peculiar ring; we were making fun of it, young men to-day so rarely wear any sort of jewellery.

Professor (*rising, surprised*). Jack wore a ring?

Lydia. Yes.

Professor. Not when he left the house at seven! To the best of my knowledge the boy never owned, or never wore, a piece of jewellery.

Jean (*looking at* Professor). He wore a ring to-night, Professor.

Lydia. A heavy gold ring set with a large stone, a "cat's-eye," I think.

Jean (*nodding in agreement*). He said it was.

Lydia. He had been telling us that this cat's-eye was luminous, that one could distinctly see it in the dark.

Professor. Absurd!

Lydia. So we said, and we laughed at him, and he got rather angry, and offered to prove it. At *his* request I asked Nelson to turn off the lights.

Killian. And of course you couldn't see this luminous ring of his?

Lydia. Oh! Yes! Quite clearly!

Professor (*turning to* Nelson). Nelson! You're a sensible fellow.

(Nelson *comes down a few steps nearer to the* Professor.)

Nelson. You could see it, Professor, from the very minute the lights went out.

Jean. It was quite distinct, a pale, queer-looking, luminous spot, that moved when he moved his hand.

Peter (L.C.). After a moment my wife asked to have the lights. Nelson switched them on—your son was still seated in his chair, his body sprawling forward on the table—that knife there—— (*pointing to knife on desk*).

(Anne *is intent on* Peter's *speech, she rises, sways and faints.*)

Nelson (*sharply*). Look out, sir!

(Ben *catches her and puts her in settee* L.C. Mary *comes down and kneels in front of her.*)

Ben. She's fainted! (*Bending over her.*)

(Nelson *moves up to get water from* L.)

Mary (*the maid*). No wonder. Poor thing. Get some water, Nelson.

Nelson. Here. (*Bringing a glass of water.*)

Mary (*taking glass from* Nelson). Drink this, Mrs. Holt.

(*The other ladies, who were seated, have risen also.*)

Ben (*leaning on settee above her*). Anne, dear! Anne!

Anne. I am sorry—I—I——

Mary. Drink this, Mrs. Holt.

(Anne *drinks.*)

It is all right, Mrs. Holt.

Ben (*who has placed her tenderly into settee, straightens up and faces* Killian *sternly*). My wife isn't strong enough for much of this. I must ask you to let me take her home as soon as possible.

(Mary *takes glass up to* Nelson, *who replaces it and joins* Mary *up* L.C.)

Anne (*sobbing*). He was so strong, and well. He has always been so strong.

Killian (C. *to* L., *facing* Anne). You've known him a long time?

Anne. Yes.

Ben. She's known him always. Let her alone, can't you?

Killian (*sternly*). Just a minute.

Ben. All right, but if you get her hysterical you'll wish you'd taken my tip, that's all.

Professor (*who has crossed to above* Anne *when she fainted*). It's all right, Anne, dear, we are all of us going to try to control ourselves. (*Moving back to his seat* R.C.)

Killian (*watching her carefully*). You seem to be very much upset over this young man's death, Mrs. Holt.

ANNE. Upset! Who wouldn't be! (*Turning to her husband.*) Ben! Please take me home. (*Rising.*)

KILLIAN (*motioning her to reseat herself*). Not just yet. (*Turning to* PETER.) I want to know if, before the lights were put out, there had been anything in the nature of a quarrel?

PETER (*appealing to the others*). No!

LYDIA (*who has moved up and opened the French window* R.). I was congratulating myself upon the success of my dinner, it had all seemed so friendly, and so pleasant. (*About to return to her seat.*)

KILLIAN. And this ring?—Mrs. Rankin says they had been making fun of the young man?

JEAN (*sitting in front of table* R.). I asked him what the girl's name was, the girl who gave it to him, I meant, of course.

KILLIAN. Did he answer?

JEAN. No, but he wasn't angry, how could he have been?

PROFESSOR (*from his seat above table*). I don't understand about the ring. Jack wore no ring, and I know of no jewel that is actually luminous, at least to such an extent as you describe.

KILLIAN. Oh, p'raps some trick toy to get a laugh.

PROFESSOR. It may have some significance. Did he mention where it came from?

LYDIA (R. *corner*). Not in *my* hearing.

JEAN. I sat next to him. I think I was the first one to notice it on his finger; we were talking about it, and laughing, but I'm sure he didn't say where it came from.

KILLIAN. We'll take a look at it. Ask the Doctor to remove it from his finger, Carney.

(PETER *moves up* L.)

CARNEY. Yes, Inspector. (*He exits* C.)

KILLIAN. You sat beside him, Miss Rankin?

JEAN. On his right. I sat between poor Jack and Mr. Holt.

BEN. That's right.

KILLIAN. Who was on his left?

NEIL. My wife, Mrs. Linsey. (*Pointing to* RUTH *at top of settee* L.C., *who rises.*)

KILLIAN. It would be better if each one of you answered for yourselves.

RUTH (*rising and coming forward in front of settee to* L.C.). I was at his left, Mr. Rankin was at the other side of me, at the head of the table. I am sorry if I seemed to be slow in answering, but I am very much distressed. I live next door, between this house and Professor Donovan's. I have known Jack ever since I was married. I am trying to be calm, trying very hard to control myself. (*Turning to* NEIL.) Oh, why did you make me come here! I begged you not to make me come.

KILLIAN. Why shouldn't you come?

NEIL (*crossing a little to* KILLIAN *and* R. *of his wife*). She's

worried about the children; our little girl has been ill and my wife is unfortunately of a rather nervous temperament. I hope you won't think it necessary to question her at length. It is impossible that she could know anything of this affair.

Killian. Some one knows something about it.

Professor (*top of table, rising*). If there is any woman in the world incapable of concealment or deception I should say it was Mrs. Linsey.

Ruth. You are—very kind to me. (*Moving back to settee. Sitting again and weeping.*)

Neil (*turning impatiently to* Killian *after his wife is seated*). Please!

Killian (*after pause. Gently*). I want to do this as decently as I know how, but I have got to get the facts.

Professor (*standing*). What connection could this rather mysterious jewel have with the attack on my son?

Killian. I doubt if there is any. It seems to me to be a question of——

(*As he speaks the door opens and* Carney *enters.* Killian *pauses.*)

Oh, let's see that ring, Carney.

Carney (*coming down to* L. *of* Killian). It isn't there, Inspector.

(Carter *rises.*)

Killian (*impatiently*). On his finger, I told you.

Carney. No ring on his finger, Inspector, nor in his pockets, nor anywhere about the dining-room. We made a thorough search.

Jean (*rising, but remaining by table*). But we all saw it.

Lydia (*who has returned to her seat on settee* R., *leaning forward*). It must be there.

Carney (*coldly*). The matron won't be long, Inspector, I guess you'll be needing her. (*Moving up to door.*)

Lydia. What do you mean?

Killian (*to everybody*). One of you took it—one of you has it now. (*Turning up.*) Carney! As soon as the matron comes bring her in.

Carney. Right! (*He exits.*)

Professor. Gone from my poor boy's hand since he was struck down in the dark. What damnable thing is going on here? (*Coming* C. *and down in front to settee* R.)

Killian. For a minute I was afraid I was up against one of those crimes that has brains behind it. I had nothing to go on, any one of you could have done it, any one of you might have got away with it, but crooks and murderers are never smart, outside of story books.

Professor (*front of table by settee* R.). One of them has the ring, you think?

KILLIAN. Of course.

(*Re-enter* CARNEY.)

CARNEY. Inspector, the matron is here.
KILLIAN. Where is she?
CARNEY. Here, sir!

(MRS. DOWD, *the police matron, enters* C.)

KILLIAN. Carney, show these ladies into that room . . . (*Pointing to room* L. *He nods toward door* L.) Mrs. Dowd, search them.

(JEAN *meets* DAVID, *who has come to top of table* R.)

Make a thorough search. I am looking for a ring, a heavy gold ring set with a cat's-eye, or something of that sort.
MRS. DOWD. Yes, Inspector. (*Exits door* L.)
LYDIA. Is this really necessary?
KILLIAN. Yes.
CARNEY (*beckoning the ladies to the door* L.). Come, please. (*Opens door at* L.)
ANNE. Ben! (*Turning and clinging to* BEN, *afraid.*)
BEN. It's all right.
PETER (*angrily*). Search these ladies! My wife and my guests!
KILLIAN. Yes.

(PETER *moves down* L.)

DAVID (*at top of table with* JEAN. *To* JEAN). Don't be frightened.
JEAN. Why should I be?
KILLIAN (R.C., *looking from one to another*). Unless the one who has the ring wants to save us the trouble—we are going to get it, you know.
PETER (*down* L., *advancing to* C.). You mean that I am to let your man search me! Put his hands on me!
KILLIAN (C.). You can refuse to allow this search, any or all of you, that's your right, but any or all of you who do refuse I propose to put under arrest on suspicion of knowing something about this murder.
PETER (L.C.). You are exceeding your authority, Mr. Killian.
KILLIAN (R. *front*). The law gives me a right to detain material witnesses.
LYDIA (*crossing up* C. *towards* L.). It is very unpleasant, as your hostess I am humiliated and ashamed, but it seems that we are quite powerless—— (*Crossing* L. *to door.*) Shall we end the matter as quickly as possible?
JEAN (*crossing with* ANNE, JEAN *exits first*). Of course.
CARNEY (*door* L.). Come, please, ladies!

(*The* LADIES *exit.*)

(*Crossing to door* R.) This way for the gentlemen.

Peter. I propose to find out if a man's home can be turned into a police court. This is a damned outrage. (*Exit* r.)

Lydia. Peter! (*Exits* l.)

Mary (*to* Ruth). Now don't be nervous, Mrs. Linsey, they won't bother you, but just a minute.

(Mary *and* Ruth *exit door* l. *Men exit* r.)

(Ben, Neil, David, Peter *exit.* Carter *hesitates as if going to return to room, then exits.* Carter *exits last.*)

Nelson (*assisting* Carter *out* r.). Steady, sir. (*As he starts to pass* Horace.)

Professor. Nelson!

Nelson (c.). Yes, Professor! (*Turning back.*)

(*By now all the women have gone to room* l. *and all the men to room* r. Nelson *is alone with* Killian *and the* Professor.)

Professor (r.c.). That young man, the last one out—— ?

Nelson. Mr. Carter, Professor. Horace Carter, he's a new one, he came here for the first time to-night.

Professor. Watch them, Nelson, while they are being searched. I know I may depend on you.

Nelson (c.). Thank you, Professor, I'll do what I can, but I don't know as I can trust myself after this.

Killian (l.). Why not ?

Nelson. I was in the room when Mr. Jack was killed. Not ten feet from him. The lights weren't out a minute in all, they were talking and laughing, when I snapped the lights on again and turned every one of them were in their seats—and he—we went to school together, Professor, you know that. (*Steps to* Professor, *facing up stage.*)

Professor (*kindly, with his hand on his shoulder*). Do what you can, Nelson.

Nelson. Yes, Professor. (*He exits door* r.)

Professor (*following* Nelson *up. Pauses and then comes down* l.c. *After pause*). "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." (*Moving up* c.) I have thought of myself as a Christian, but I want a more immediate and personal revenge. (*With a look at* Killian.)

Killian (*up* c.). Some one wanted that ring pretty bad, and took a long chance getting it.

Professor. Yes. (*Crossing down* r. *and sitting on settee.*)

Killian (*up and down stage to* Professor *at table*). Was it a row over one of these women here, or was some one after the damned thing for its value ? (*Down* c.)

Professor. If it belonged to Jack it had no great value. He had only a moderate allowance.

Killian (r.c.). Was the boy in business of any kind ?

Professor. No, he left college two years ago and has spent the greater part of his time since then in travelling abroad.

KILLIAN. Rather expensive, wasn't it?

PROFESSOR. Yes. He was about ready to settle down and go to work.

(JEAN *enters from* L.)

I was trying to find a business opening for him.

KILLIAN. Had much trouble with him, women and that sort of thing?

(*As he speaks,* JEAN RANKIN *comes down.*)

PROFESSOR. No, Jack was prudent and careful. He was a good boy always, he would have been a fine man.

(JEAN *hears this with a look of surprise and contempt, turning to settee* L. KILLIAN *is looking at her and he steps forward and speaks sharply.*)

KILLIAN (*crosses* C. *To* JEAN *at* L.). You don't look as though you quite agreed with Professor Donovan, Miss Rankin.

JEAN (*coldly*). No.

PROFESSOR (*rising at* R.). Jean!

JEAN (L.). I am sorry for you, Professor, more sorry than I can possibly say——

KILLIAN (C. *to* L.). What did you have against the boy?

JEAN (*coldly*). I beg your pardon?

KILLIAN (*crossing close to end of settee* L.). You've admitted you didn't like him.

JEAN (*coldly*). But there are so many people I am quite willing to admit not being especially fond of, all sorts of people.

KILLIAN (*moving away to* L.C.). Meaning me?

(ANNE HOLT *enters and goes down* L. *in front of fireplace, half crying.*)

JEAN (*scornfully. Rising and crossing to* KILLIAN *at* L.C.). That's deduction. Of course I've read about it, but it's hard to believe that detectives really could be so clever.

KILLIAN. Oh, I'm not one of the clever kind, never even had my picture in the Sunday paper.

JEAN. While there is life there is hope. (*Turning on her heel and crossing to* ANNE, *who is seated on settee at* L., *crying.*) It's all right, Anne, don't cry!

ANNE. I was so happy. Now——

JEAN (*sitting on settee with her arm around* ANNE). It's all right.

KILLIAN. About this cat's-eye ring he wore? Did you ever see it before? Before to-night, I mean? (*A pause.*) I am talking to you, Miss Rankin.

JEAN (*facing* KILLIAN. *Looking round*). I think I told you about that already, Mr. Killian—we were looking at it and——

KILLIAN (*taking a step nearer*). What I asked you was, did you ever see that ring before to-night?

PROFESSOR (*turning away* R. *at table*). Of course she didn't.

Killian (*firmly*). Answer me, Miss Rankin.

Jean. No, I won't. (*Rising and moving a few steps to* Killian.)

Killian. You refuse to answer?

Jean. Yes.

Professor (r.). You can't do that, Jean.

Killian (l.c.). No, I assure you, you can't do that. Now please don't force me to extreme measures, Miss Rankin.

Jean (l., *coldly*). Extreme measures?

Killian (l.c., *sharply*). Answer me or I'll have you sent down to the station house.

Jean (*turning and looking at* Anne, *who has risen and is looking at* Jean. *Then reluctantly*). I saw that ring once before to-night.

Killian (*close to* Jean l.c.). When?

(Ben Holt *enters from room at* r. *and goes up to* r.c.)

Jean (*facing to* l.). It was almost a year ago.

Killian (*on her* r.). Where?

Jean. It was—— (*As she speaks she sees* Ben *and stops.*)

Anne (*following* Jean's *eyes and seeing* Ben *and showing fear*). Jean! (*Rising and going to* Jean *on her* l.)

Killian. Go on.

Jean (*facing up to* r.). I can't.

Killian. Just a minute, young lady. (*He turns angrily and strides toward door at* c.)

Anne (l.c.). No! Wait!

(Killian *turns.*)

(*To* Jean.) Tell him, Jean!

Jean. No. (*Looking at* Ben, *alarmed.*)

Anne. She saw that ring once before. I showed it to her. It was on my finger.

Ben. Anne! (*Crossing down* l.c. *to* Anne, *hurt and astonished.*)

Jean. It was when Jack Donovan came home from Europe the first time, Ben—over a year ago——

Ben (*crossing* Jean *to* Anne *down* l.). You wore his ring?

Anne. It was before we were engaged, Ben, just before. You and I had quarrelled—you remember that awful time.

Ben (*turning away past* Jean *to* l.c.). I never trusted him. I knew——

Anne (*passing* Jean *to* Ben *on his* l.). Ben! Please! I know I was a fool. He put the ring on my finger one night, I only wore it two or three days, then I gave it back to him.

Ben (*bitterly*). You quarrelled with him, I suppose?

Anne. It was when you did, and I took your part.

Killian (*who is near the* Professor *at* r.c. *To* Ben). Oh! *You* quarrelled with him, did you?

Ben (*coldly*). Yes—over a year ago.

(Anne *sinks on to settee and sobs.*)

PROFESSOR. And you've had no trouble since then? (R.)

BEN. Trouble? (*He hesitates.*) No.

PROFESSOR. You are sure?

BEN (L.C.). That depends upon what you call trouble.

PROFESSOR. My boy said something of that sort to me, only a little over a week ago. He came home one night, I saw that something was wrong and asked him if there had been any trouble.

BEN. Well? (*A step nearer the* PROFESSOR.)

PROFESSOR. He answered, just as you have, "That depends on what you call trouble"; he had a bad bruise on his cheek. Do you happen to know anything about that?

BEN. How should I? (*Turning away.*)

PROFESSOR. I had been reading in my front window all that evening; half an hour before he returned I had seen him pass the house.

BEN. Well? (*Looking straight at the* PROFESSOR.)

PROFESSOR. With your wife.

BEN (*angrily turning to* ANNE). So you lied to me!

ANNE (*jumping up and coming close to* BEN). I had been here with Jean and when I left he followed me! I couldn't help it—when you asked me if I had seen him since he returned from Europe this last time I said no—I shouldn't have said it—only I didn't want to make you angry, and I knew how you had always—always——

(*She looks at* KILLIAN, *who is now close to* BEN *on his* R., *and stops.*)

KILLIAN. Always what? (*To* ANNE.)

PROFESSOR (*near to* KILLIAN, *quietly*). Always hated him!

BEN (*turning to* KILLIAN). Yes. I hated him. Make the most of it. But let me tell you this. If you are going to start in arresting every man who hated Jack Donovan you are going to have a busy night.

(ANNE *again sits on settee.*)

JEAN (*to* BEN *at* L.C.). There was absolutely nothing between Jack and Anne. You must believe that, Ben.

BEN. She wore that damned ring of his. Don't you suppose I know what that means?

JEAN. Just a silly flirtation, when you had quarrelled, six months before you were married. It didn't mean anything. Anne was no more in love with him than I was.

KILLIAN (*to* BEN). Your wife had told you she hadn't seen this young man since his return from his last trip to Europe?

(BEN *goes up* C. *and sits on chair* L.C. *near the screen.*)

ANNE. I just didn't want any more trouble, that's all.

KILLIAN. He had been here a good deal, I take it—here in this house, I mean?

PROFESSOR. Yes. He was here almost every day, here to see you, Jean.

(*He speaks to her very gently and, as he speaks,* Lydia *comes on from room* L. *but stops in the door.* Jean *does not see her.*)

Jean. No. Jack didn't come here to see me.

Killian. You've already told us that your stepmother was doing her best to bring you two together.

Jean. He didn't come here to see me at all. At first perhaps he did, but not lately.

(*Enter* Peter Rankin *angrily from the room, buttoning his waistcoat.*)

(Lydia *enters from the room* L.)

Professor. If my boy didn't come here to see you, Jean, why did he come at all?

Peter (*comes down to* C.). What! What's that?

(Lydia, *moving down between* Peter *and* Jean.)

Lydia. Answer them, Jean. (*Smiling at her coldly.*)

Jean (*to* Lydia). You are smiling! You are amused! You think I am afraid to answer?

(Ruth Linsey *enters from the room at* L., *remaining at the door.*)

Lydia. Jack Donovan was very much in love with Jean, that, of course, is why he came here. I could hardly flatter myself to the extent of believing there could be any other reason.

Peter (C.). Don't be absurd.

(Professor *at his chair near table.*)

Lydia. Had Jean been quite herself she and Jack would have been engaged to be married weeks ago, and it is possible that this very dreadful thing might not have happened. (*Crossing down* R.)

Peter (*looking from* Lydia *to* Jean). What are you keeping from me—you two? Surely a man has the right to know what is going on in his own house.

(Neil Linsey *enters up* R.C.)

Jean. That is more than a man's right, father. It's a man's duty—and you haven't done it.

Lydia. Have you? Do you think a girl is doing her duty when she meets constantly, and often in secret, a young man of whom her natural guardians disapprove?

Jean (*sneeringly, crossing to* Lydia *at* R.C.). Do you call yourself my natural guardian? You who took my mother's place before she had been dead a year!

Peter. Jean! (*Moving a little to* L.C.)

Jean. You disapprove of David Cornish! Shall I tell you why? Because he is the only man of all the men you surround yourself with——

RUTH (*hysterically*). Stop her! Don't let her go on. (*Crossing to* C.)

NEIL (*coming down to* RUTH, C., *sharply*). Ruth! Cut that out!

RUTH. I knew this was coming! I have been waiting for it. Oh my God! My children! My—— (*Sitting on settee* L.)

NEIL (*fiercely*). Ruth! (*Crossing to* RUTH. KILLIAN *crossing to* L.C.)

JEAN. She often says she wants to be a mother to me—she pretends to wonder why, when a good man like David Cornish comes to——

(CARNEY, *the police officer, enters from* R. *with* DAVID CORNISH *to up* C. CARNEY *has one hand on* DAVID'S *arm and in the other hand he holds a short but heavy automatic pistol.*)

CARNEY. Inspector!

KILLIAN. Well?

CARNEY. Chief, I got this gun out of his pocket.

KILLIAN. Let's see it. (*Taking the revolver from* CARNEY.)

JEAN. David!

LYDIA (*contemptuously*). Am I such a monster, then? Was I so far wrong in my opinion of this young man?

KILLIAN. What were you doing with a thing like this on you, at a dinner-party—in a house like this?

DAVID. I can't explain. It wouldn't be of any use, nobody here would understand.

KILLIAN. It's too bad you brought it with you, isn't it, since, as it turned out, you didn't need it?

JEAN (R.C.). What do you mean by that?

KILLIAN (L.C.). I mean he didn't need the gun, because the knife was right there, handy, when the lights went out. Carney!

CARNEY. Yes, sir?

KILLIAN. You didn't find that ring on him, did you?

CARNEY. No, sir, up to now we haven't found it at all.

KILLIAN. I must have it.

CARNEY. Yes, sir. Will you look after him, sir, while I finish with the others?

KILLIAN. Go on.

(CARNEY *exits* R.)

I think I have the goods on you, Mr. Cornish.

DAVID. Just because I had a revolver in my pocket—after all, no one has been shot.

PROFESSOR (*from* R. *of table*). You came here to-night at Jean's request, not by the invitation of Mrs. Rankin—Jean was, or fancied she was being forced into the society of my son. Is it a fair assumption that you considered yourself her defender?

DAVID. Yes, I considered myself her defender.

Professor. And to be sure of being able to defend her, did you bring that revolver?

David. No, not exactly that.

Killian. But near enough—but before you had a chance to use it the lights went out; you got up and——

Jean. He didn't!

(*All turn to* Jean.)

He couldn't!

(Nelson *enters from door* R. *and stops by the door.*)

Anne!

(Anne *rises.*)

David sat between you and Mr. Linsey, Jack was at the other side of the table. David couldn't have left his place, taken that knife from in front of father, and done this terrible thing, without one of you knowing it.

Killian. Well, Mrs. Holt?

Anne (L. *corner*). I was watching Jack's ring in the dark. I don't remember noticing anything else at all.

(Mary *enters with* Mrs. Dowd *from the door* L.)

Killian. And you, sir? (*To* Neil.)

Neil (*up* R.C. *at chair back of table*). How can I tell who moved, or didn't move? It was absolutely dark.

Killian. You noticed nothing, then, of any kind?

Neil (*hesitates*). Why——

Killian. Go on!

Neil. Some one passed back of my chair, just before the lights went on. At the time I supposed it was one of the servants.

Professor. Nelson! Did either you, or Mary, pass back of Mr. Linsey's chair in the dark?

Nelson. No, sir. I stood beside the electric light switch; Mary stood between me and the foot of the table.

Mary (L. *at door*). I was right behind Mrs. Linsey's chair. When the lights went out I was sort of afraid. I put my hand out in the dark and caught Nelson by the arm.

Nelson (*smiles*). She was still holding it when I put the lights on again.

Neil. Some one passed behind my chair, I am sure of that.

Nelson. Whoever did it would have had to go back of Mr. Linsey's chair, nobody could have gone around the table the other way without passing Mary and me, and there wasn't room.

Professor (*down to* Lydia). You, Jean, and you, Mrs. Rankin, were the only ones near enough to my boy to have touched him without moving from your place, but whoever killed him had to get that knife. Where was it?

Peter (L.). In front of *me.*

KILLIAN (*to* PETER). Could Mr. Cornish have reached it from where he sat?

PETER. Yes—yes—I think it is possible.

DAVID (*step down* C.). No more possible than for any of half a dozen others.

KILLIAN. But you see you came here ready to kill.

DAVID (*fiercely*). Yes—I came here ready to kill.

JEAN. David! (*Crosses to* R.C., *passing* RUTH.)

DAVID (*remaining* C.). But I didn't come here ready to kill a man in the dark, to stab him in the back.

(JEAN *turns away quietly.*)

KILLIAN. Out with it. Come, clean. What was it you came here to do?

(CARNEY *enters door* R., *preceded by* HORACE CARTER.)

CARNEY. Inspector.

(DAVID *moves over* R. *to* JEAN. *She moves him* R. *corner.*)

I've found the ring. (*Brings* HORACE *down* C. *He holds up a gold ring set with a cat's-eye stone.*)

KILLIAN. Good! Let's see it! The cat's-eye ring.

(*He takes the ring from* CARNEY *and, as he does so, puts the revolver down on the table. On this table is also the silver-handled game-knife.*)

CARNEY. I spotted this man as soon as I got to the house; all the rest of them looked rattled, but this one looked sick—a couple of times I thought he was going to faint. Just now when I found that ring in his side pocket he would have dropped if I hadn't had him by the arm. (*Up to door.*)

KILLIAN (L.C.). Your name is Carter?

HORACE (R.C.). Yes.

KILLIAN. Carney, here, isn't the only one who spotted you. Unless I'm very much surprised, there are some cross-currents under this affair. Unless I miss my guess, more than one of you is in this thing.

PROFESSOR (*crossing from above table to* KILLIAN. *Stopping and turning at* C.). He took the ring off my dead boy's finger. He killed him.

KILLIAN. Where did he sit at the table?

NEIL. Right next to me.

KILLIAN. Yes—and right next to that man there. (*Pointing to* DAVID.) It was easy enough for Mr. Cornish to reach out and get that knife and hand it to this fellow here. Mr. Linsey has told us that he passed between his chair and the wall.

NEIL (*up* R.C. *at chair above table*). Some one did. I didn't know who, how could I?

Horace. I didn't leave my seat. I don't know how that ring got into my pocket, someone put it there, I didn't.

Killian. Well, my God! You're not going to deny it, are you?

Horace. I didn't kill Jack Donovan.

Killian. Bosh!

Horace (*quietly*). And I can prove it.

Killian. You admit you know something about it, then?

Horace (*pause*). Yes (*turn front*) I know something about it.

Professor (L. *of* C.). You can tell me who killed——

Killian. Hold on. (*To* Horace.) I've got to warn you——

Horace (*smiles*). I know, "that anything I may say will be used against me."

Killian. Yes.

Horace. This officer has told you that I looked sick when he came into the room. As a matter of fact I have been very ill.

Lydia (R. *corner*). It's true, Mr. Killian, we all have been greatly worried about it.

Horace. And this is the first time in over two months that I have been allowed to accept any social engagement.

Killian. Sit down! Get him a chair, somebody.

(Horace *sits in chair placed by* Nelson *up* C.)

Horace. Thank you. Cross-currents, you said, more than *one* tragedy here. You were right, Mr. Killian. I am rather sensitive to impressions, more so than ever, I think, since I have come back from the very brink of the grave. From the moment I came into this house to-night I have been conscious of these cross-currents. I think I have never felt so keenly the presence of deep conflicts of fear and hatred.

Killian. It isn't a lecture we're after. We want to know where you got that ring.

Horace. It was dropped into my pocket.

Killian. At the time of the murder?

Horace. No, since we came into this room.

Killian. And you know who did it?

Horace. I know the only one who could have done it.

Professor (C.). The murderer?

Horace. No, the ring was dropped into my pocket by a man—I think that your son was killed by——

David (*fiercely*). Be careful what you say.

Horace. By a woman.

Killian. Go on.

Horace. And I will tell you why I think so. The conversation had turned to young Mr. Donovan's ring—at Mrs. Rankin's request the lights were turned off—I looked with interest at the little luminous spot—which was, of course, the ring on Mr. Donovan's finger. As I looked, the luminous spot moved as though he had passed some object to some one standing behind him.

(JEAN *and* LYDIA *look at each other.*)

KILLIAN. Wait a minute. Do you mean to say that this stone here—(*he looks at the ring*)—shows up so clear in the dark that you could tell what he was doing with his hand?

HORACE. I do.

KILLIAN. That's impossible, absolutely impossible. I don't believe it.

HORACE. It is easy enough to prove it—turn the light out and see for yourself.

JEAN. It is really true, Mr. Killian.

KILLIAN. Carney! Turn those lights off a minute.

CARNEY. Yes, Inspector.

KILLIAN. You've got to show me.

(CARNEY *switches lights out. In the dark the audience sees a small round disc of pale light, made either by a phosphorus stick or a small flashlight painted down so as to be just a dull glow—this spot of light moves back and forth as* KILLIAN *moves his hand. Ad lib. remarks by everybody.*)

PROFESSOR. It's true.

KILLIAN. Well, I'll be damned! That's the way it looks. Put the lights on, Carney.

CARNEY (*switching lights on*). Yes, Inspector.

KILLIAN. Have you any idea——

RUTH (*screams*). Oh!

(*All scream and point to* HORACE, *who is sitting back in his chair stabbed to the heart by the silver-handled game-knife.*)

(*The knife is tricked to look as if it had been driven through his shirt-front, and on the shirt there are spots of blood.*)

PETER. Good God!

KILLIAN (*rushing up and bending over* HORACE, *then looking up*). Right through the heart.

PROFESSOR. One of you in this room!

(KILLIAN *looks from one to another of the frightened group as*

The CURTAIN *falls.*)

ACT II

The French window curtains are closed.

Half-hour later, the screen has been brought forward and placed in front of table up L.C. CARNEY *is in hall at back on guard. Door up* L. *opens and* JEAN *and* ANNE *enter.*

JEAN. But we can't do a thing!

ANNE. We can try! (*They cross to door at* C. *and open it.*)

CARNEY (*standing in the doorway*). Sorry, but nobody can leave this room.

ANNE. But——

CARNEY. It's the Inspector's orders!

JEAN (L.C. *at door*). I must know! Poor Mr. Carter! Is he——?

CARNEY. Out there. (*He nods toward* R.)

JEAN. With the doctor?

CARNEY. No, miss, the blade of that knife was driven straight through the young fellow's heart—no doctor can do anything for *him.*

ANNE (L.). Poor Horace! He was different from Jack Donovan!

(JEAN *crosses to* R. *of table.*)

(ROBERTS *enters from* C. CARNEY *closes door.* ROBERTS *stands inside.*)

CARNEY. It was about as tough a thing as I ever saw pulled off.

JEAN. And what is going to become of all of us?

ROBERTS. The Inspector will let the rest of you go, of course.

JEAN. When?

ROBERTS. As soon as he's arrested the guilty party.

ANNE. But who *is* the guilty party?

ROBERTS. That's up to the Inspector, I don't have to answer that, I'm only a cop, thank God! (*Exit* C. *to* L.)

JEAN. You don't know, then, who is to be arrested?

CARNEY (*at door*). No, miss, only the poor fellow was saying just before they killed him that there was more than one in the job, and I'll *bet* he was right.

JEAN. But you can't quite send a person to goal on a bet. (*In front of table.*)

CARNEY. That's right, too, but we've got ways of finding out things. (*He exits to hall, shutting door.*)

ANNE. "More than one in it," he says! I hope he was right. (*Crossing down to* JEAN *on settee* R.C.)

JEAN (*quickly*). Hope! Why do you say that, Anne?

ANNE. I—I don't dare to tell you! (*Taking a few steps up.*)

JEAN. You *do* know something about it, then? (*Rising, taking hold of* ANNE *on her* L.)

ANNE (*afraid*). Jean!

(ANNE *looks about fearfully.*)

JEAN. Don't tell me! Don't tell anyone!

ANNE. They will question us all!

(*They both move to settee* R.C. *and sit.*)

JEAN (*sitting above* ANNE). Listen, dear! If you know anything, or think you know anything, about this, you must keep it to yourself.

ANNE. But can I?

JEAN. I don't know what you saw, or guessed, but, Anne, you do know what Jack Donovan was!

ANNE. I know when I gave him back that awful ring, a year ago, I thought I was safe. I thought I would never have to be afraid of him again!

JEAN. Hush, dear! (*Seeing the knob of door* L. *turn.*)

(LYDIA *enters.*)

LYDIA (*moving to* C.). Where are the police?

JEAN. Outside.

(LYDIA *crosses to hall door* C.)

You can't go out there, none of us can.

LYDIA (*moving down* L.C.). This is an outrage! Your father should do something about it.

ANNE (*rising and crossing behind* JEAN *to door* R.). I am going to find Ben!

JEAN. Remember what I said.

ANNE. If I can! (*Looking at* LYDIA.) But I don't know! I don't know what to do! (*She exits.*)

LYDIA (L.C., *looking after* ANNE). She thinks her husband killed Jack Donovan. (*Contemptuously.*)

JEAN (*scornfully*). But you don't think so? Do you?

LYDIA. No. (*Smiling coldly as she faces* JEAN.)

JEAN (*by settee* R.C.). I have known how clever you were from the day Father brought you here! I never expected to see you in a situation so complicated that you couldn't find a way out, but I don't see how you are going to find your way out of this!

LYDIA (*crossing to* JEAN *at* R.C.). And just how do you propose to lead David Cornish out of it? Do you know what I heard him say to Jack Donovan, on the veranda, just before we went in to dinner?

Jean (*alarmed*). Then they did meet?

Lydia (*with a laugh*). Oh yes, they met, and David said to Jack: "I brought a gun in my pocket, Donovan! You know what for! You'll give me that ring before I let you out of my sight to-night—or——"

Jean (*in horror*). I don't believe you!

Lydia. Mary heard it too, she was with me in the dining-room, by the open window.

Jean. She mustn't repeat it—to them! (*Looking at door* c. *to hall, anxiously.*)

Lydia. She won't repeat it, unless I tell her to.

(Jean *sinks down on settee, her head on* r. *arm. Laughing and coming to* Jean *and putting her hand on her shoulder.*)

We must be very prudent, all of us, mustn't we? We must all be very careful.

Jean (*afraid*). Yes. . . . Yes!

Lydia. I am sure you will be.

Jean. Yes.

Lydia (*sitting on settee above* Jean). We haven't been the very best friends just lately, have we, dear? Once or twice I have even fancied that you were trying to be really nasty to me.

Jean. No, I was trying not to be.

Lydia. For more than two months you have deliberately set yourself against me!

Jean. You know why, don't you?

Lydia. No.

Jean. I thought you had guessed!

Lydia. No.

Jean (*rising hopelessly*). Then I can't tell you! I'd like to, but I can't! (*Crossing* l.c., *facing to* l.)

Lydia. You hate me?

Jean. Yes! (*She turns on* Lydia *with a sudden flash of spirit*—c.)

Lydia (*rising*). When I stepped through that door the first day —(*pointing to door* c.)—I knew that you were going to hate me. (*Moving up level with* Jean.)

Jean. I meant to try to be friends with you—I promised father I would—and at first I did try.

Lydia (*sneeringly*). Not for one minute! You were bitterly antagonistic from the first hour! It showed in a hundred little ways! (*Crossing up* l.c.)

Jean (*moving over to table* r.). I did my best; perhaps you tried, too. I don't know. At first it wasn't so bad, it was only the idea that I hated . . . until a few weeks ago.

Lydia (*turning sternly*). And then? Speak out! I am going to know just what you mean! (*Taking a step towards* Jean *angrily.* Jean *looks at her with cool defiance.*)

Jean. You don't want to know what I mean.

LYDIA. I do!

JEAN. Don't tempt me—or I'll put it into words.

(PETER *starts speaking off stage. As the two women face one another, tense and defiant, the door at* L. *opens and* PETER RANKIN *enters.* PETER *is, as usual, quite unaware of the seriousness of what is going on around him and is in a state of petty irritation.*)

PETER (*closing door. As he starts up stage he sees the attitude of the two women and he stops*). What's this, another quarrel, at a time like this? What is it?

JEAN. It isn't anything, Father. (*Turning away, facing to* R.)

(LYDIA *strolls away to* L.C.)

PETER (*crossing to* C. *between them*). I expect an answer to my questions! What is it?

LYDIA (*turning to* PETER *on his* L.). She is simply impossible! My patience is exhausted.

PETER (*sternly, to* JEAN). Jean! Is this a time——

JEAN. No, Father!

PETER (*moving down* R. *below settee*). I can't tell you how your attitude has hurt me.

JEAN (*a step nearer to* PETER). Wouldn't it be better if I went away for good, I mean? It must come, sooner or later, why not get it over? (*Putting her head on* PETER'S *shoulder.*)

PETER. Are you out of your mind? This is your home!

JEAN. No. It's hers. (*Looking at* LYDIA, *bitterly.*)

PETER (*coldly, putting her from him*). You are ungenerous.

JEAN. Of course it must seem that way to you.

PETER. If you had made the least effort, there never could have been any trouble, but no—you have never forgiven my marrying again.

JEAN. Mother meant a lot to me. (*Sitting on settee* R.) It was hard to understand. Harder still to understand a sudden marriage to a woman so outside of our world.

PETER. Your stepmother is a talented woman. I had money enough and position enough for both! The whole affair was strictly my own business.

JEAN. I know—that's why I am going away. (*Rising and moving up a step, facing up stage.*)

PETER (*angry*). I absolutely forbid . . .

LYDIA (*crossing to* PETER, *and putting her hands on his shoulder*). Just a moment, dear. We can talk of this later, you know. She isn't going away to-night. No one is going to leave here until they have made an arrest.

PETER. Surely we have enough on our minds, Jean, without your adding to it. I do wish you would try to have a little dignity.

JEAN (*turning*). Dignity?

PETER. This quarrelling with your stepmother is hardly worthy

of you. Some little feeling of this sort is natural, but you carry it too far. (Peter *turns to* Lydia *and puts his arms around her.*) What more could any woman do than she has done to take your mother's place?

Jean (*bitterly*). You are right, as usual, Father. No woman could do more than she has done, to take my mother's place.

(Neil *and* Ruth Linsey *enter from* L. Ruth *goes down* L., *followed by* Neil. Lydia *goes to* R. *above table.*)

Neil (L.C.). Well? (*To* Peter.) Have you found out anything?

Peter. Just a moment. (*Crossing and opening door to hall and* Carney *steps to open door. Attempting to pass* Carney L.)

Carney. Wait a minute! (*Blocking the way.*)

Peter (*coldly*). Are you aware that this is my house?

Carney. Nobody is to pass this door.

Peter. I am Peter Rankin.

Carney. My name is Carney.

Peter. I wish to use my telephone!

Carney. Against orders.

Peter. Whose orders?

Carney. The Inspector's.

Peter. Where is he?

Carney. I don't know.

Peter. You can think, can't you?

Carney. Against orders.

Peter. Will you take a message to him for me?

Carney. No, sir!

Peter (*furiously*). What!

Carney. Against orders. (*Shutting the door in* Peter's *face.*)

Peter (*crosses a little to* Neil L.). In the ten years you have been in the bank with me, Linsey, have you ever seen me treated like this?

Neil (L.C.). Not great respectors of persons, these policemen.

Peter. Come, dear. (*To* Lydia.) We must join the others. They are our guests, we must do what we can. (*Both crossing to* L. *door.*)

Lydia. Yes. (*They go toward door* L.)

Peter. I can't understand it! Such a thing to happen in my house.

(Peter *and* Lydia *exit into the room* L.)

Ruth (*bitterly*). He can't understand such a thing happening in his house! In his house! (*Looking about scornfully.*)

Neil (*moving to* Ruth L.C.—*angrily*). Now stop that, Ruth!

Ruth (L., *seated on settee, facing the fire*). You shouldn't have made me come here to-night. I told you you had no right to make me come.

Neil (*with cold patience, kneeling on front settee* L.) Listen, Ruth, we are all of us upset. God knows, we've reason enough to be. . . .

RUTH. I knew that something terrible would happen if you were wicked enough to make me come here again!

JEAN (*crossing to* C.). Don't get excited, Mrs. Linsey. No matter what has happened, you are not to blame for any of it.

RUTH. I begged him not to bring me here.

NEIL. And I told you that my position depended on it. You know how easily your father is offended. (*Crossing to* JEAN C. *a little.*) Jean, my whole future depends on his favour.

RUTH (*rising and coming up* L.C.). And what does my future and the children's depend on now?

NEIL. Ruth! For God's sake! (*Moving to her.*)

RUTH (*holding him off*). Don't touch me! Don't! (*Going up to door* L.)

NEIL (*starting after* RUTH). Ruth!

RUTH. No. (*She exits to room* L.)

NEIL (*turning back to* JEAN). She's been like that for almost a month. (*Standing and looking angrily after her.*) I don't know what's wrong with her.

JEAN (*bitterly*). Is it so hard to guess?

NEIL. What do you mean? (*Turning and coming back to* JEAN C.)

JEAN (*bitterly*). You're the one who should have been killed here to-night, Neil Linsey! If I were a man, I think I would try to do it now!

NEIL (*sneeringly*). But you're not a man—so I am safe. You know, women have been known to kill, haven't they? As a matter of fact, it may be just possible that it is a woman who has been so busy here.

JEAN. Surely you haven't the effrontery to suggest that I——?

NEIL. No! You didn't do it. I thought it was you until the second man was killed. But I know better now. I know damned well who did it, and so do you!

(DAVID CORNISH *enters from door* L., *and as he sees* NEIL *and* JEAN *together, he shuts the door behind him and steps forward fiercely.*)

DAVID (L.). What's he saying to you?

JEAN (*quickly*). Don't make any trouble, David.

DAVID. I told you, Linsey—— (*Stepping fiercely to* L. *of* NEIL C.)

NEIL. Don't you threaten me!

DAVID. What!

NEIL. I wouldn't! (*Catching* DAVID *by the wrist.*) I should be very careful if I were you not to make any more enemies right now. You can't afford it, can you? Look! (*Holding* DAVID'S L. *arm up and looking at* DAVID'S *cuff.*)

(*On* DAVID'S *cuff is one round blood spot.*)

JEAN (*in horror*). David!

David. Good Lord!

(*For a moment all three stand looking down at the blood spot, then* Neil *drops* David's *wrist with a laugh, crossing* David *and moving up* L.C.)

Neil (L.C.). I am going to the others; if I were you I'd be a little careful, Jean, about what answers I made to any questions the police may ask you. (*Starting to go* L.)

Jean (*afraid*). Yes.

Neil (*at door up* L.). And be sure to have Mr. Cornish keep his coat-sleeve pulled well down. That spot on his cuff doesn't look well, you know.

(*Exits to room at* L., *shutting the door after him.*)

Jean. David, that spot on your cuff?

(Killian *rustles paper behind screen up* L. *and pencil rolls down stage from beneath screen.* David *sees pencil after putting hand in pocket.*)

What's that?

David. It's a pencil. Some one must have dropped it—it isn't mine. (*Business—writes on card taken from pocket and shows it to* Jean.)

Jean. Oh dear, how silly. (*Starting to* R. *of table.*) I'm so jumpy. (*Taking cigarette from box.*) I suppose it's just that we're so nervous to-night—all of us. Give me a light, please, David, I can't find a match.

(David *holding match across table to* Jean's *cigarette.*)

David. Here. This is all very terrible, of course. But really it's no business of ours.

(Killian *moves screen.*)

We will just have to wait, I suppose, and make the best of things.

Jean. By the way, David, how did you burn your cuff so badly? Let's see. (*Taking* David's *cuff and burning spot of blood.*) David dear, how careless you are.

(*Police whistle.* David *moves up stage and is intercepted by* Carney *and* Killian.)

Killian. His cuff! Quick! Look at his cuff. (*They throw themselves on* David.) This arm!

(David *is brought to* C.)

Carney. There! (*Holding* David's *arm up.*)

Killian. Hell! She's burned a hole clean through it!

Carney. What was it?

Killian. If I don't miss my guess, it was a blood spot. (*Crossing to* Jean R.) You burned that spot on his cuff!

JEAN. I?

KILLIAN. You don't dare deny it!

JEAN. Oh, but I do. Of course I deny it.

KILLIAN (R.C.). But it sort of galls my pride to have her make a damned fool of us. It was cute the way she decorated this gentleman's wrists, wasn't it, Carney? I wonder if *we* couldn't do something to decorate them?

CARNEY (*grimly*). We might try. (*Feeling in pocket for handcuffs.*)

KILLIAN. Yes.

CARNEY (*to* DAVID). Stick your hands out. Out with them! (*Taking a pair of handcuffs from his pocket and snapping them on* DAVID'S *wrists.*)

KILLIAN. You're under arrest!

JEAN (R.). No!

DAVID (C.). It's all right, dear!

KILLIAN (R.C.). You bet it's all right.

CARNEY (L.C.). Shall I take him down town, Inspector?

KILLIAN. Not yet. Give him to one of the boys outside and tell him to keep an eye on him.

JEAN. Mr. Killian.

KILLIAN (*crossing to* L.). You'd better not talk, Miss Rankin. Take him out!

CARNEY. Come!

(CARNEY *takes* DAVID *by the arm and they move toward door* C. *as* PROFESSOR DONOVAN *enters. The* PROFESSOR *stops as he sees* DAVID *with the handcuffs on his wrists.*)

PROFESSOR. So it was you, Cornish?

DAVID. No.

KILLIAN. Pretty good case, Professor.

DAVID. But not good enough.

KILLIAN (L.). Why isn't it?

DAVID. Because *I* didn't kill your son, Professor Donovan.

KILLIAN. Of course you say that.

DAVID. Yes; of course I would.

KILLIAN. Take him out!

CARNEY. Come!

(CARNEY *exits* C. *with* DAVID, *shutting the door.* JEAN *crosses to* R.C.)

PROFESSOR (*coming down* C., *sternly*). How much do you know about all this, Jean?

JEAN. I am afraid to say anything at all.

KILLIAN (R.). She knows plenty! Take it from me!

PROFESSOR (C.). Tell the truth, Jean, all of it. It would be the best thing for every one in the end.

JEAN (*crosses up to* PROFESSOR, L.). Professor, I think you are going to get the truth before very long, and when you do, you will know why it was so impossible for me to be the one to tell you.

KILLIAN (*to* JEAN). Wait in there. (*Pointing to* L.) I'll send for you when I want you.

JEAN. Yes, Mr. Killian.

(*She exits* L., PROFESSOR *crossing to table* R. *with a tin dispatch-box he brought in with him.*)

PROFESSOR. How sure are you that David Cornish had anything to do with this?

KILLIAN. Have you any reason to doubt it?

PROFESSOR. It's because of Jean, I have always been fond of her. What is there against the boy? (*Crosses to table* R.)

KILLIAN (C.). While you were away, I baited a little trap. I sat back of that screen and I got an earful. Cornish was in it all right, that isn't the trouble.

PROFESSOR. Well?

KILLIAN. He isn't the only one in it. These are big people, Professor, they have a lot of power and influence in the city, and I am almost afraid of what we are going to see before we get to the bottom of this.

PROFESSOR. You're not a coward, Killian. You are not going to be afraid to do your duty?

KILLIAN. No. I'm not. I'm going through!

PROFESSOR. Thanks!

KILLIAN. No—it isn't because I'm a hero, you know, or anything like that. (*Crossing around front of table to* R.) But this is my game. I love it! Did you find anything among the boy's papers?

PROFESSOR. I brought this—(*touching the dispatch-box*)—and this. (*Taking envelope from pocket, and shaking bits of white and blue paper out on table.*) I took these from the bottom of his waste basket. I never knew him to take the trouble to destroy anything before. I wondered if these fragments might not be pasted together.

KILLIAN (*as they bend over table*). These are bits of two different letters—a man's handwriting and a girl's. (*Holding up a small piece of the blue paper.*) Let's see. (*Reading the words on one of the torn pieces.*) "Again—I cannot forget" . . . Humph; not much to that.

PROFESSOR. Look! (*Having fitted two of the torn pieces together.*) These two pieces fit! (*Reading.*) "Because I know that he would kill . . ."

KILLIAN (*taking the pieces of letter out of* PROFESSOR'S *hand*). We've got to get all of this. I want some paste and some blank sheets of paper. (*Turning to go to door, crossing up* C. *at back* R.)

PROFESSOR. Do you mind if I ask Mr. Rankin's man to get what you want? To tell the truth, I have a reason for asking.

KILLIAN. The young fellow, Nelson? You suspect him?

PROFESSOR. Not exactly. At least, I don't suspect him of

murder, but he is a very shrewd fellow, and he is bound to know more than he has told about what has been going on here.

Killian. Get him in.

(Professor *turns to go, crossing* L.)

Wait a minute.

(Professor *turning back.*)

One thing I ought to say to you.

Professor. Yes?

Killian (*following to* C.). When you start digging in the mud, it's hard to keep yourself clean. You never can tell just what sort of muck you are going to turn over next.

Professor. Well?

Killian. We have got to do our duty, of course, but it might be the kindest thing you could do for this boy of yours if you did not try to dig too deep into what's been going on.

Professor (*slowly*). I thought of that, of course, but I have faith in my son; if I am wrong, I must suffer for it. (*Opening door* L. *and calling.*) Nelson! Just a moment! (*Leaving the door open and crossing back to* Killian R.C.) Nelson and my boy were at school together and they were in the same base-ball team. If Nelson knows anything, I think he will tell me for old time's sake.

Killian. Unless he did it himself, or had a hand in doing it.

(Nelson *enters from the door* L.)

Professor. Well, that's what we want to discover—who did it?

Nelson. Yes, Professor?

Professor. Mr. Killian wants a tube of paste, if there is such a thing, Nelson, and one or two sheets of fairly large writing-paper.

Nelson. Yes, Professor. (*Crossing to a desk up* R.)

Professor. You might be looking over the papers here in this box, Mr. Killian.

Killian. Yes. (*Sitting* R. *of table and starts looking over the papers in the tin dispatch-box.*)

(Professor Donovan *turns to* Nelson, *who is at desk up* R.)

Professor. Everything all right in there, Nelson? (*Looking towards the door of room* L.) There hasn't been any trouble of any kind? (*Close to table.*)

Nelson. As far as I could see, sir, nobody has been killed for the last few minutes. Here's the paste, sir. (*Crosses to* Professor R.C.) What kind of paper, sir?

Professor. Letter size.

(Nelson *crossing up* R.)

Did Miss Jean tell you, Nelson, that Mr. Cornish had been arrested?

(*Front of table.*)

Nelson. No, sir. Is this paper large enough, sir? (*Holding up some sheets of legal size writing-paper.*)

Professor. Yes, thanks.

(Nelson *crosses to table with tube of paste and paper.*)

I don't know this young Cornish very well, what's your opinion of him? (*Sitting on chair* L. *of table.*)

Nelson. I thought he was all right. As a matter of fact I took it for granted.

Killian. Why did you?

Nelson. Because of Miss Jean——

Killian. You mean because she is in love with him?

Nelson. At least I meant no presumption, just that I have faith in her judgment.

Professor. We are quite at a loss, Nelson! We don't know who did this dreadful thing!

Nelson. No, sir. I suppose it isn't possible for you to do what I've been doing.

Killian (R. *of table*). What's that?

Nelson (*back of table*). Trying not to think about it.

Professor (L. *of table*). No!

Killian. You know all these people! You must have some opinion of your own!

Nelson. Not any more; after the second young man was killed, and you sent us all into that room there, I started trying to figure it all out.

Professor. Naturally.

Nelson. Yes, sir, but I couldn't keep my mind on it.

Killian. Why couldn't you?

Nelson. Well—I got thinking that some one of the people shut up with me wasn't exactly what you could call safe company. I noticed that everybody in there pushed their chairs right up against the wall, so no one could come behind them!

Killian (*with a smile*). How about you?

Nelson. Oh, I stood in the middle of the room and kept turning around. I was getting a little dizzy when you called me. Can I help you any, Professor?

Professor. Sit down, Nelson, and see if you can fit these torn bits together.

Nelson. Yes, sir. (*Sitting at table* R. *between* Killian *and the* Professor.)

Professor. Here are two torn letters. I found them in the waste-basket in my son's room. I'll do this one on the blue paper, you take the white.

Nelson. Yes, sir. (*Looking at the white pieces.*) It's a woman's writing.

Professor. Yes.

(*They both work.* KILLIAN *holds up one of the papers from the box.*)

KILLIAN. What's this? I can't read it! It's no language I ever saw.

PROFESSOR. Let me see. (*Looking at the paper.*) Arabic.

KILLIAN. What?

PROFESSOR. Modern Arabic I should say, although I am ashamed to say I can't translate it. Jack spent several months on the desert.

KILLIAN. Oh! Arabs! Hell! I didn't know they could write.

PROFESSOR. It might be well to have this translated.

NELSON. Professor Wayland, down the street, sir, he can read anything.

PROFESSOR. Yes, I'll send it over.

KILLIAN. What for? We're not looking for any Arabs just now, thank you! We may not be dead sure just yet who did this thing, but we know damned well who didn't!

NELSON. All it takes is a little patience and you'll know who did it.

KILLIAN. How's that?

NELSON. It seems to be rather the general opinion in that room there, that at the rate things are going, there won't be but one of us left alive by morning.

PROFESSOR (*sternly*). My son has been killed, Nelson! Do you find anything amusing in that?

NELSON (*seriously*). No, sir. I beg your pardon, sir. I'm only kidding a little to keep my heart up, but it's a bad thing for all of us.

PROFESSOR. Have you anything against Cornish aside from the fact that he brought this revolver here with him? (*Touching* DAVID'S *revolver, which is still on the table.*)

KILLIAN. I'll make it more before I'm through. (*Glancing at* NELSON, *who has by now almost fitted together the letter he is working on.*) You seem to be getting on pretty well with that, young man.

NELSON. This one wasn't so much torn as the one you have, Professor . . . there—that's it!

PROFESSOR. Read it.

NELSON. Some of it is missing, sir, the bottom of the page and the signature.

KILLIAN (*rising*). Let's see! (*Reading over* NELSON'S *shoulder.*) "Dear Jack—I left the ring, I told you I never would wear it again. I can't forget all that is between us, but after last night I can't go on. I lied to Mr. Cornish because I knew that he would kill——"

NELSON. That's all, the rest is missing!

PROFESSOR. It's enough! The woman who wrote that letter can clear the whole thing up!

KILLIAN (*rising and crossing to* C.). It was Cornish, of course, and he did it for a woman—or else he helped a woman do it.

Nelson. You agree with poor Mr. Carter, then? You think a woman did it?

Killian. Carter thought so, and Carter was killed because he knew too much, but I don't know—if it was just the Donovan boy, I'd say a woman might have done it, but both of them, I don't know! If it was a woman she's got a damned good nerve. (*Down* c.)

Nelson. Yes, sir.

Killian. The only girl here that Cornish would go the limit for is Jean Rankin!

(Nelson *rises.*)

Is that her handwriting? (*At table* r.)

Nelson. I don't think so, sir, I can't be sure!

Killian. Well, it won't take long to make sure! It was one of those women in there!

(Professor *rises.*)

Professor. One of them! No! I won't believe it! I can't!

Killian. Well, I am going to prove it to you! (*Crosses, opens door* l. *and calls.*) Ladies! Come in here for a moment, if you please! Just the ladies! (*He turns quickly to* Nelson.) Cover that letter! Get it out of sight!

(Lydia, Jean, Ruth, Anne *and* Mary *enter.*)

Lydia. You called us, Mr. Killian?

Killian. Yes, I——

(Carney *enters at* c.)

Carney (*leaving the door open*). The District Attorney on the 'phone, Inspector.

(Killian *steps up.*)

He says he wants to speak to Professor Donovan!

Professor. We are old friends! I am going to ask his help!

Killian (*angrily*). I am running this, you know!

Professor (r.c.). I meant no offence, but I must know the truth! I have done my best to bear this blow—but I am almost at the end of my strength!

Killian (c.). I understand, but I can't let him think I am not attending to my business—we will speak to him together. Come!

Lydia. In that case we need not——

Killian. Just a minute! Carney! While I am gone, Nelson there is going to ask each of these ladies to write a few words on a bit of paper!

Carney. Yes, sir.

Nelson. Write what words, sir?

Killian. Let them write, "because I knew that he would kill,"

all of them! See that they do it, Carney! Come, sir! (*To* PROFESSOR.)

PROFESSOR. Yes.

(KILLIAN *and* PROFESSOR *exit* C.)

JEAN (*crossing* C.). Why should he ask us to write that, Nelson?

NELSON. A sort of experiment, I believe, Miss Jean!

LYDIA. I think that we should refuse to say anything or do anything without the advice of a lawyer! (*Crossing* R. RUTH *sits* L.)

NELSON. He told me to ask you to write, I can only ask. Here is a pen.

(LYDIA *crosses down extreme* R.)

JEAN (*crossing to table* R.). I am going to do it! What was it?

CARNEY. Because I knew that he would kill!

JEAN. Yes. (*Writing.*) "Would kill"—there! (*Handing the small pad to* NELSON, *and he rips off the top sheet and looks at it and smiles.*) What are you smiling about?

NELSON (*writing*). It's all right to ask a person why they're crying, Miss Jean, there's always a chance you might do something for a person that's in trouble, but when you see a person smile, just say nothing and thank God!

(JEAN *rises and crosses up back to* R.)

(*Turning to* MARY.) You next, Mary, write on this pad here.

MARY (*crossing to table*). I'm nervous! I know it won't look good!

NELSON. That's all right, we are not offering prizes.

MARY (*looking again at* NELSON *and writing*). There!

NELSON (*looking at it*). *K N O W*—not *N O*—"that he would kill."

(JEAN *is up* R.)

MARY (*hastily*). I'll fix it! (*Crossing to up* R.)

NELSON. No! It's all right! Mrs. Holt? (*Turning to* ANNE.)

CARNEY. Mrs. Holt.

ANNE. Yes. (*Crossing to table* R. *Nervously putting out her hand to pick up pen and drawing back with a low cry.*) Oh!

JEAN. What is it?

ANNE. Jack's ring! That awful ring! Look! (*Bending over table and picking up the ring.*)

CARNEY (*sharply*). Don't touch that!

ANNE. Oh! (*She is startled and drops the ring.*)

CARNEY. Here! (*Stepping forward.*)

ANNE. I am sorry!

LYDIA. Here! (*Picking up the ring and putting it on the table.*) Mrs. Holt is very nervous! You will be good enough not to needlessly alarm her!

CARNEY. We'd better get on with the writing.

Nelson. If you please, Mrs. Holt!

Anne. Yes—I'll try—— (*Taking pen and writing, then crossing* L. *to settee.*)

Nelson. Mrs. Rankin! (*Writing on back of* Anne's *slip.*)

Lydia (*to* Nelson). What are you writing on the back of those sheets?

Nelson. The name of the one who writes it—— (*Crossing to* C.)

Lydia. Oh yes! Well—— (*Writing, then looking at it, and coming to* C.)

Nelson. Just one more—Mrs. Linsey.

(Lydia *looks at* Ruth.)

Ruth (L., *nervously*). Why should I write that? "Because I knew that he would kill!" Hasn't there been killing and talk of killing enough here to-night! I won't write it!

(Lydia *moves to* L.C.)

Nelson. You heard what the Inspector said to me, Mrs. Linsey? As a matter of fact, I am as much a prisoner here as you are, and it's nothing to me whether you write it or not.

Ruth. Why should you serve him?

Nelson. Habit, Mrs. Linsey, that's the worst of being brought up a servant. I suppose that when I get to Heaven I'll go about polishing the other angels' crowns.

Jean (*coming down on the* R. *of table*). You had better write it, dear, we must do all we can to make things easy for one another.

Ruth. No.

Jean. Tell her she ought to write it, Nelson.

Nelson (*quietly*). No, Miss Jean, I don't want to tell her that.

Ruth (*suddenly—crosses to table* R.). Give me the pen.

Nelson (*pointing to paper*). Here!

Ruth (*looking at* Nelson). "Because I knew that he would kill."

Nelson (*repeating*). "Because I knew that he would kill."

(Ruth *writes.* Nelson *takes the paper and writes on the back without looking at it.* Ruth *remains near the table.*)

Lydia (*scornfully—crosses* C.). You are not curious about Mrs. Linsey's handwriting. I notice you didn't look at it.

Nelson. No, I didn't look at it.

Lydia. Well? Is that all?

Nelson (*gravely*). For the present, I have no further orders.

Lydia (*angrily*). You have no orders for me!

Nelson (*with a smile*). I have no further orders from the Inspector.

Lydia. When this is over I am going to discharge you, Nelson.

Nelson (*quietly*). When this is over I wonder if you and I will be in a position where that will be possible, Mrs. Rankin!

Lydia. Come!

(LYDIA, ANNE, JEAN, RUTH *and* MARY *exit to room* L. NELSON *sits at table and looks at the slips on which the women have written.*)

CARNEY (*crossing to table* R.). Anything there? Did one of them write it?

NELSON. If they did they disguised their writing—unless—hello! (*Looking at one of the slips of paper.*)

CARNEY (*eagerly*). What is it?

NELSON (*crossing down below table*). There is a powerful reading-glass in Mr. Rankin's den, may I get it?

CARNEY. I don't think I ought to let you leave the room, I'll get it!

NELSON. You will find it in one of the drawers in the table in the corner. Be quick! I think I've found something!

CARNEY. All right!

(*Exits up* R. NELSON *looks at door, then quickly touches a match to one of the slips of paper and burns it up, dropping the burning paper on an ash-tray. He then sits at desk and writes a duplicate slip and turns it over and writes on the back and carefully shuffles it with the others. He then turns the ash of the burnt paper into his pocket-handkerchief and wipes the ash-tray and puts his handkerchief back into his pocket and spreads the slips out and sits and looks at them as* PROFESSOR *and* KILLIAN *enter from* C.)

KILLIAN. He seems quite definite in his opinion. He is right, of course, from his point of view, but I haven't failed yet, and I am not going to fail. (*Crossing* L.)

CARNEY (*entering*). Here's the glass!

KILLIAN. What glass?

NELSON. It is the samples of the ladies' handwriting, sir, one of them looks rather, I don't exactly like to say suspicious—I asked the officer to get Mr. Rankin's reading-glass.

KILLIAN. Good! Let's see! (*Crossing* R. *and taking the glass from* CARNEY.)

(CARNEY *moves to door.*)

Which one? (*Bending over* NELSON.)

NELSON (*back of desk*). There is something unnatural about this one, sir—almost as though the writing had been purposely disguised.

KILLIAN (*back of desk*). Humph—— (*Looking.*) Where's the letter? Oh yes! That handwriting may be disguised, but it's a cinch the person who wrote this never wrote that letter. I'll look these over, you keep on with that other letter, Professor.

PROFESSOR (L. *of door up* R.). It is too much for me, see what you can do with it, Nelson. Sit here! (*Crosses around back of table.*)

NELSON (*sitting at table*). A man's writing—this won't be hard, Professor.

(PROFESSOR *moves down to* R. *of table.*)

KILLIAN (*looking at slips*). We will need a handwriting expert for this, but I'm damned if I can find any likeness. 'Phone down for Jim Mason, Carney.

CARNEY. Yes, sir. (*Exits* C.)

PROFESSOR. We must know who wrote that letter!

NELSON. Yes, sir, because this one doesn't seem to be of much importance.

KILLIAN. Can you read it?

NELSON. Yes, sir. (*Reading.*) "Dear Jack: I must answer you exactly as I answered Ben Holt, 'You can't get blood out of a turnip.'—N.L."

KILLIAN. N.L.

NELSON. Neil Linsey. (*Passing letter to* KILLIAN.)

KILLIAN. Hello! That's the fellow with the nervous wife, lives next door, doesn't he?

NELSON. Yes, sir.

PROFESSOR (*bending over paper*). "You can't get blood out of a turnip."

KILLIAN. Wait a minute! "Exactly as I answered Ben Holt"! Holt is in this somewhere, I am sure of that! There may be something here! (*Crossing to door* L. *and calling.*)

(PROFESSOR *is* R. *of table.*)

Mr. Linsey! Just a moment! (*Turning back to* PROFESSOR.) You know these people better than I do, don't hesitate to ask any questions that seem important.

NEIL (*entering from* L.). You want me?

KILLIAN. Just a moment, Mr. Linsey.

NEIL (C.). Well?

KILLIAN (*places chair for* LINSEY L.C. *of table, facing audience*). Sit down, Mr. Linsey.

NEIL. Thanks.

NEIL *sits in chair at* R.C., *so that now all four of the men are grouped about table,* NELSON *on the downstage side with his back to the audience,* PROFESSOR *on* R. *and* KILLIAN *above the table.*)

KILLIAN. Did you ever have any business dealings at all with young Mr. Donovan?

NEIL (*scornfully polite*). Was Jack in business?

KILLIAN. I am asking you!

NEIL. I have been with Mr. Peter Rankin for over ten years in his bank, you know. I have no outside business at all.

KILLIAN. Neither with Jack Donovan or with Ben Holt?

NEIL. Holt is a lawyer; we are old friends, but in no way connected in business.

KILLIAN. Then what's this? (*Reading the pasted together letter.*) "Dear Jack: I must answer you exactly as I answered Ben Holt,

'You can't get blood out of a turnip.'" This is signed N.L. . . . I assume that stands for Neil Linsey. (*Passing note to him.*)

Neil. Oh yes, I wrote that note. (*Handing the note back to* Killian.)

Killian. Well?

Neil. But it had nothing whatever to do with business. It was just about a new golf club that Jack was trying to promote. It was rather an—expensive proposition, and I didn't feel able to join.

Killian. Know anything about this golf club, Professor?

Professor. No. (*Looking through papers in the box.*)

Neil. I think it probable, Professor Donovan, that there were a good many of Jack's activities that you knew nothing about.

Professor. Here at least is one I knew nothing about. (*Holding up a paper from the tin box.*) Not in business of any kind with my son?

Neil. No.

Professor. And never have been?

Neil. No.

Killian (*above the desk*). What's up?

Professor. Then explain this, Mr. Linsey! (*He reads paper.*) "December eighteenth, nineteen twenty-five. On demand I promise to pay to John Donovan three thousand five hundred dollars." It bears your name, Mr. Linsey.

Killian. Hello! (*Taking paper and looking at it.*) Neil Linsey! What's this?

Neil. Nothing. Jack and I got to playing Russian Bank soon after his return from abroad. At one time I did owe him a large sum, but it evened itself up, later. I supposed, of course, that note had been destroyed.

Killian. "'Can't get blood out of a turnip.'"—It looks to me like he was trying to collect.

Neil. No. (*Pause.*)

Killian. About this cat's-eye ring of his? I suppose he told you its history?

Neil. That, I believe, he reserved for feminine ears.

(Nelson *picking up ring.*)

Professor. Did my boy ever speak of the ring to you? (*Pointing to the ring.*)

Neil. I noticed a ring on his finger one night when we were playing cards. I don't know whether it was that ring there on the table or not. Let me see it, will you, Nelson?

Nelson. Yes, sir. (*Rising and crossing to* Neil *and handing it to him.*)

Neil. Thanks.

(Nelson *returns to his seat.*)

Killian. (*After a pause.*) Well?

NEIL (*looking at ring*). This doesn't seem to be the ring he showed me.

PROFESSOR. He couldn't have had more than one!

NEIL (*looking inside the ring*). I think so, Professor. That ring was marked inside with some odd marking.

PROFESSOR. An Arabic symbol, like the English crown marking, or our own "sterling." You will see it there.

NEIL. I see no mark here of any kind.

KILLIAN. It's plain enough! Here! (*Rising and taking the ring from* NEIL.) I'll show you. (*Looking at inside of the ring.*) What!

PROFESSOR. Killian!

(PROFESSOR *and* KILLIAN *look at* NEIL.)

KILLIAN. Look at it! (*Handing it to* PROFESSOR.)

PROFESSOR. No markings! (*Looking at the setting.*) A different stone.

(NELSON *crosses to front of table.*)

This isn't the ring they found on Horace Carter. This isn't the ring that was on my boy's hand when he was killed!

(NELSON, PROFESSOR *and* KILLIAN *look at* NEIL.)

NELSON (*taking ring*). Look at that stone! Just a common bit of agate. No lustre to it. It can't even shine under the light, sir.

KILLIAN (*rising and crossing to* L.). Wait a minute! This is getting just a little bit too rough for me. I'd like to know just what sort of a game we are up against!

PROFESSOR. Whatever the motive back of these two crimes, that ring had some part in it! And now the ring is gone!

KILLIAN. But not one of these people are gone, don't forget that! (*Crossing up to door at* C. *and calling.*) Carney!

CARNEY (*entering*). Yes, Inspector?

KILLIAN (*crossing to down* L. NEIL *rises and crosses up* R.C.). Come in here, all of you.

CARNEY. Yes, sir. (*Crosses to* L.)

KILLIAN. And get the police van!

(NELSON *puts* NEIL'S *chair back up* L.C. *and goes up.*)

(PETER *and* LYDIA *enter.*)

PETER. I absolutely insist, Mr. Killian, that this——

KILLIAN (*sternly*). You'll let me do the talking.

(RUTH, ANNE, BEN, MARY *and* JEAN *enter.* RUTH *in front of fireplace.* ANNE *back of settee at fireplace.*)

Carney!

CARNEY. Yes, Inspector?

KILLIAN. Get Mr. Cornish.

(CARNEY *exits.*)

PETER. If Mr. Cornish is guilty of these horrible murders, he should be placed under arrest.

KILLIAN. He is under arrest!

PETER. Then I insist that there be no further persecution of myself and my guests.

(CARNEY *enters with* DAVID, *who is still handcuffed, and stands at door* C.)

KILLIAN (*goes* R. *of* C.). The ring worn by Jack Donovan has been taken from this table since I laid it there a moment after Horace Carter was killed.

(*Everybody comes forward a step excitedly.*)

PETER (*startled*). Taken!

KILLIAN. I have been trying to be sure of what I was about, Mr. Rankin, before I made any arrests among people of your position; but I am going to take the gloves off now and go at this with bare knuckles! Is your name Mary? (*Crossing to* C., *turning to* MARY, *the maid-servant.*)

MARY (*comes down* L.C. *a little*). Yes, sir. Mary Doyle.

KILLIAN. Just before dinner to-night, you were in the dining-room with Mrs. Rankin?

MARY (*down a little more*). Yes, sir, Mrs. Rankin always comes in just the last thing to see if the table is right.

KILLIAN. You were standing near the window opening on to the veranda?

MARY. Was I, sir? I don't remember.

KILLIAN. You'd better remember, or I'll send you somewhere where they'll cultivate your memory.

MARY (*afraid*). Yes, sir.

KILLIAN. Mr. Jack Donovan and Mr. Cornish here were outside on the veranda.

MARY. Yes, sir. I heard them talking.

KILLIAN. You heard Mr. Cornish threaten Jack Donovan?

MARY. I——

KILLIAN. Repeat what he said!

(MARY *looks at* LYDIA.)

Stop that!

MARY. Mr. Jack said something about——

KILLIAN. Not something about! What about? Just what did he say?

MARY. Mr. Cornish, "You know I've got a gun here and you know what it's for!"

KILLIAN. Go on!

MARY. Then he said, "You'll give me that ring before I leave to-night, or—or . . ."

Killian. Or what?

Mary. Or he said he'd use the gun!

(Jean *turns up stage towards* David.)

Killian. Is that right, Mrs. Rankin?

Lydia. Yes, but I don't see how you know it.

Killian. I was behind that screen when you repeated it to Miss Rankin. (*Movement from all.*) I heard a number of things that are going to need clearing up—and we will take them one at a time, because I am going to get the whole truth of this Donovan affair before any of us leave this room! You can sit down if you want to—this may take a bit of time. (*Crosses* L.)

Peter (*indicating seat at end of settee* R. *below*). Sit here, my dear.

(Peter *sits at* R. Lydia *sits on his* L. Professor Donovan *at the table.* Carney *stands* R.C. *with* David.)

Killian. Now, Mr. Cornish (*dropping down extreme* L.), have you any reasonable explanation to make of why you came here to-night armed with that revolver on the table there?

David (C.). I made my explanation out on the veranda there, just before we went in to dinner. I explained myself quite fully to Jack Donovan. My exact words have been repeated to you by Mary and by Mrs. Rankin.

Killian (L.C.). You demanded this ring from Mr. Donovan?

David. Yes.

Killian. Was it your property?

David. No.

Killian. Why did you want it?

David. I don't think I care to answer that.

Jean. Tell him, David!

David. No.

Killian. You admit you told him that unless he gave the ring to you, you would kill him before you parted for the night?

David. I think I would have done it, but I didn't. The hunt was on to-night, Mr. Killian. But some one got in ahead of me.

Professor (R., *by desk*). Why should anyone want to harm my boy?

Killian. But they did want to, didn't they, Mrs. Holt?

(Anne, *seated on settee* L., *rises in astonishment.*)

I think you could tell us something about this.

Ben (*down* L.—*angry*). My wife! Don't drag her into this!

Killian. You're all of you in it, as far as I can see. Every one of you, and you are going to make a clean breast of it before I get through with you!

Peter (*rising at* R. *from settee*). I am going to hold you to account, sir, for every word you say.

KILLIAN (*turning to* PETER). All right. Now you tell me this: What was this David Cornish doing in your house when, by your wife's own statement, he wasn't welcome here?

PETER. He came here to see my daughter.

KILLIAN. After you had forbidden it?

PETER (*reluctantly*). Practically—yes.

KILLIAN. Was there an engagement of marriage between them?

PETER. No, I had forbidden that, absolutely!

KILLIAN (*down* L.). And no such engagement existed, or exists now?

PETER. No.

KILLIAN. Is he right, Mr. Cornish?

DAVID. Absolutely right.

KILLIAN. You do not consider Miss Rankin bound to you in any way?

DAVID. Absolutely not!

KILLIAN. And you, Miss Rankin?

JEAN (*in chair up* L.C.). There is no engagement. (*Coming down to* KILLIAN *a step.*)

KILLIAN. You do not consider yourself bound to Mr. Cornish in any way?

PETER. Naturally not!

(NEIL *drops down to the* R. *corner.*)

KILLIAN. Let her answer.

JEAN. It is a difficult question. I think I must ask you to excuse me.

KILLIAN. You must answer!

JEAN (*bravely*). I love Mr. Cornish. I think he cares for me, and when he asks me—if he does ask me—I am going to marry him.

LYDIA (*sitting on settee* R.). Not with my consent—neither mine nor your father's.

JEAN. Without it, then! (*Coming down in line with* PETER.)

PETER. You owe something to your name.

JEAN. Why?

PETER. It is an honoured one!

JEAN. Now! But will it be to-morrow?

PROFESSOR. Jean! What do you mean by that!

JEAN. David has done nothing. I know that, just as I know you are all against him. (*Facing* PETER *and* LYDIA.) You have never been fair to him, either of you, but I am going to marry him if he wants me.

KILLIAN (*down* L.). Unless, of course, he is convicted of murder.

JEAN. He won't be convicted of murder, Mr. Killian. I have your word for that.

KILLIAN. My word?

JEAN. You said that before we left this room you were going to find out just what had happened here to-night.

Killian. Are you sure you want it all found out, Miss Rankin? (*Moving up to* Jean.)

Jean. Yes—if it is the only way to clear Mr. Cornish.

Killian. Then tell me why you burned that hole with your cigarette in Mr. Cornish's cuff!

Jean. I might have touched his cuff with my cigarette, but, of course, I didn't burn it on purpose.

Killian. Mr. Linsey!

Neil (r. *corner*). Well?

Killian. When you came into this room a little while ago I was back of that screen there.

Neil. Well?

Killian. You and Mr. Cornish had some words. You caught his wrist and looked down at his cuff. And said, "That spot on your cuff doesn't look well."

Neil. Yes.

Killian. What sort of a spot did he have on his cuff, Mr. Linsey?

Neil. It was a spot of blood.

Killian. Which this young lady burned through with her cigarette before I could get my hands on him.

David (c.). It was, however, as you notice, on my left wrist, not on my right.

Killian (l.). What of it?

David. When the lights went out, just before Jack Donovan was killed, I stood up so that I might see the luminous ring on his finger. I half faced his chair with my left arm behind me, of course.

Killian. Well?

David. Some one passed behind me, and for a moment clutched my wrist to steady themselves, as they stumbled in the dark.

Killian. And you claim that is where that blood spot came from?

David. Yes.

Killian. And why haven't you mentioned before this so important a fact, that some one passed back of the table during the moment when the lights were out!

David (c.). I did not kill Jack Donovan and I haven't any mock heroic idea of wanting to be punished for something I didn't do, but I hated him from the bottom of my heart, and if the motive is the one I think, I have nothing but sympathy for the one who did kill him!

Professor. You say that some one stumbled in the dark and for a moment caught your wrist? Did you get any impression at the time as to whether it was a large man or a small one?

David. It was a woman.

(*All move excitedly. Pause.*)

Killian. Carter said *that* just before one of you got him—he

said the ring was put into his pocket by a man, but the boy was killed by a woman.

PROFESSOR. A woman? One of you? No!

KILLIAN. Linsey! When you were talking to Miss Rankin in this room you said to her, "I know who did this thing, and so do you."

(*All look at* NEIL.)

NEIL (R. *corner*). He did it, the damned coward! (*Looking at* DAVID.) And tries to throw the blame on a woman!

KILLIAN. That's your story! What's yours, Miss Rankin?

JEAN (L.C.). Ask Mr. Linsey here, what cause he had, not only to hate Jack Donovan, but to fear him.

NEIL. No cause! Absolutely no cause at all!

(NELSON *picks up the I. O. U. and hands it to the* PROFESSOR.)

PROFESSOR. This note for three thousand, five hundred dollars you claim was for a card game—and was later paid or wiped out?

NEIL. I do!

PROFESSOR (*to* NEIL). This letter—(*picking up the torn letter which has been pasted on the blank paper*)—was written by you to my son. Says (*he reads*)—"I must answer you exactly as I answered Ben Holt, 'You can't get blood out of a turnip.'" Just how did he answer you, Mr. Holt? (*To* BEN.)

BEN (L., *near* ANNE *at fire*). I am, as you know, a lawyer, Professor. I think this matter comes under the head of a privileged . . .

KILLIAN (L., *breaking in*). No! There has been something said about a woman having done this thing.

BEN. Well?

KILLIAN. There was some little trouble, if you remember, between this Jack Donovan and your wife!

ANNE (*rising*). Ben!

KILLIAN. We heard about your hate for him, and hers! And that she had at one time worn his ring. We want the truth, Mr. Holt! Are you going to help us?

BEN. Yes. (*Coming down to* KILLIAN.)

KILLIAN. What about this note for three thousand, five hundred dollars and this letter that we have here?

BEN. Jack had won a lot of money from Mr. Linsey at cards.

KILLIAN. How much do you call a lot?

BEN. Besides this note, I think there had been something like ten thousand in cash.

PETER (*above table, near* PROFESSOR, *shocked*). Ten thousand dollars!

BEN. Jack was in trouble. I don't know just what, but he needed the money and came to me; he wanted me to see Linsey and threaten to sue on the note.

KILLIAN. And Mr. Linsey laughed at you?

Ben. No, he didn't laugh at me. He asked for time. One thing led to another and he confessed that he was afraid of anything that might draw attention to his financial condition just now.

Peter. Afraid!

Ben. Yes! Of you. He not only wanted time on the note, but he tried to borrow money of me.

Peter. Neil Linsey! I don't understand!

Killian (*as* Ben *hesitates*). Go on, sir.

Ben. He admitted to me he was short in his cash at the bank.

Peter (*in horror*). You don't know what you are saying!

(Ruth *rises.*)

Ben. He was desperate, I tell you, and had to admit it!

Neil. You damned sneak!

Ben. Let's lay it all out on the table. We are in a hell of a mess, all of us. I won't have my wife's name brought into this.

Peter (*moving to* r. *of table*). You mean to say this man—the man I have benefited, and trusted—has robbed me!

(Professor *goes up* r.)

Neil. Mr. Rankin.

Peter. Is this true?

(Killian *works to* l.c.)

Neil. Let me explain.

Peter. For every lie you tell, I'll make you suffer.

(Neil *turns away.*)

Ruth (*crosses to* l. *of* Killian). Speak to him, Neil.

Neil. What can I say?

Peter. I expected something, a few excuses, a few lies.

Neil. No.

Lydia (*seated on settee* r.). After all, this is your own private business, isn't it, Peter? Suppose that you settle it in private?

Neil (*to* r. *of table*). It's only a few thousand. If you would give me a little time——

Peter. You robbed me. After all I have done for you——

Ruth (*crossing to* c.). Please! Please, Mr. Rankin. It is hard for me to speak; he has never talked to me about his business, but we own the house. I have a few jewels—and the car. We could pay, somehow.

Peter (*sternly*). He is going to prison.

(David *is up* c.)

Ruth (*to* Jean). My two babies, you know—my—Neil! Say something!

Neil. He's going through with it, Ruth. I know him.

Peter. I trusted you!

JEAN. He doesn't deserve anything, Father, but you can't be too hard on her.

PETER. Linsey! For years I've been like an elder brother to you. Helped you, promoted you. I arranged it so you could afford to take the place next door. I made you free of my house—you were my friend, my daughter's friend, my wife's friend, and you are a thief!

RUTH (*crossing to* LYDIA R.). Stop him, please. You can.

PETER. You have betrayed your trust.

RUTH. Mrs. Rankin! You must stop him!

PETER. My wife here, out of the goodness of her heart, trusted you as though you were a brother.

RUTH (*to* LYDIA). You'll have to make him stop!

PETER. How much did you remember that?

RUTH. He would have to listen to you.

PETER. There is no excuse. You haven't tried to make any; you can't!

RUTH. My two babies!

NEIL (*to* PETER). You're a big man, Mr. Rankin; couldn't you give me a chance?

JEAN. Please, Father!

PETER. NO!

RUTH (*to* LYDIA). Now you ask him.

LYDIA (*rising*). Peter!

PETER. I have never refused you anything from the day we married. Don't ask me this.

RUTH. But she shall ask you. She is beautiful and clever; she knows how to make men do what she wants them to do, and she wants this!

PETER. I refuse.

RUTH. Because it is I who am asking you? All I can ask you for is pity for myself and the children—— (*moving down* L. *a few steps to* KILLIAN), and pity isn't enough.

KILLIAN. I guess it's no use, Mrs. Linsey.

LYDIA. Peter!

PETER. I owe a duty to the bank.

RUTH. But she will make you forget your duty! She knows how to do that. Oh yes, she knows! (*Turning furiously on* LYDIA —*crossing to* C. *a little.*) You make him let my children's father alone! (*Starts back to* LYDIA.) You make him!

LYDIA (*turning to* RUTH). How can I make him?

RUTH. I don't know how! Do it your own way! Any way, but you are going to do it!

NEIL. That's enough!

RUTH. No! (*Stepping close to* LYDIA.) For a whim, for a vanity, or just for the fun of doing it, you make men give you what you want. It's not a whim with me; it's a decent life for my children! (*Turning down* L. *a step.*)

Lydia. My husband feels it to be his duty.

Ruth (*crossing to* c. *Turning to* Lydia). Make your husband forget his duty—just as you made my husband forget his.

Jean (*coming to* Ruth—*alarmed*). Mrs. Linsey! Don't!

Ruth (*to* Lydia). No man refuses you; some women are like that.

Peter. What does she mean? (*Advancing to* c.)

Ruth. I knew how it would end (*turning to* Killian), so did Jack Donovan; he used to laugh at me! We watched my husband trying to refuse her. I stood it all, just to keep a home together. (*Turning on* Peter.) You shan't take that, too!

Peter. What does she mean?

Lydia (r.c.). She is nervous—(*moving a little to* Ruth)—excited—all this has been too great a strain. Really—I think——

Peter (*fiercely*). Let that woman go on! (r.)

Ruth (*to* Killian—*two steps up*). From the very first I knew. I saw it in his face, and that first night I watched, as I have watched so many nights since then. (*To* Lydia.) It was, I think, an hour after all the lights were out, when you came to him, there in the garden, through those windows, with just a little silk robe over your nightdress. He was mine, and you took him. You shan't take all the rest!

(*Pause.*)

Peter (*turning and looking at* Neil—*stepping to table*). You swine! (*Catching up* David's *revolver from the table.*)

Jean. No! Father!

Killian. Look out!

(Peter *fires and* Neil *drops.* Killian *and* Carney *throw themselves on* Peter *and hold him.*)

Ruth (*screaming*). Neil!

(Ruth *almost faints and is caught by* Jean.)

Peter. Look at him! (*Looking down at* Neil.) Look at the damned swine!

Curtain.

(*The positions at the fall of the* Curtain: Lydia *at settee* r. Nelson *behind table.* Professor l. *of table.* Killian, Peter, Carney, r.c. Neil c. Cornish *up* l.c. Jean l.c. Ruth *on her* l. Mary *above settees* l. Anne *behind settees, and* Ben *below settees.*)

ACT III

Curtains closed.

SCENE.—PETER RANKIN L. *of* C. *held by* CARNEY *and* ROBERTS. KILLIAN *faces him, furious with anger.* JEAN *at back between them All are excited.*

JEAN (*screaming*). No, no.

CARNEY. Come on, now.

KILLIAN. Come through.

CARNEY. Leave him to me.

JEAN. No! No! Please!

KILLIAN (*fiercely*). Go on, damn you! Tell the truth!

PETER. These men are hurting me!

KILLIAN. And they will hurt you a damned sight worse unless you talk!

(PETER *sits on chair* R.C.)

PETER. I was mad, I think! I shot Neil Linsey!

KILLIAN. To hell with Neil Linsey! We know you shot him! We saw you do it—the others! You killed them, too!

PETER. No!

JEAN. He didn't! Of course he didn't! How dare you accuse a man of my father's position!

KILLIAN. What position? A murderer.

PETER. What was I to do! There are some things a man can't stand!

KILLIAN. You got what was coming to you—what else do men your age ever get, when they pick up pretty girls from God knows where, and marry them?

(KILLIAN *at* C.—PETER *rises, moves down and sits on settee at* R.—JEAN *back of table.* ROBERTS *and* CARNEY R. *and* L. *of* PETER.)

PETER. You take a cowardly advantage, sir, of your position and mine!

KILLIAN. Oh! Do I? What do you think is going to happen to me when I report that I allowed a man to be shot down right in front of me with a revolver I was holding as evidence in another murder? (*Stepping up to* PETER, *fiercely.*) You talk a lot about your position, your standing. What about mine? The only chance I've got is to get the facts in this case—and by God I'm going to get them!

Jean (*down to* Killian). Why do you keep on saying that he knows who killed Jack Donovan ?

Killian. Because he did it himself—— The knife was in front of him on the table.

Peter. Why should I have killed this boy ?

Killian. For the same reason you shot Linsey—because the Donovan boy had been fooling with your wife !——

Peter (*springing at* Killian—*held by* Police). Damn you, you shan't say that !

Killian (*sneeringly*). It's true.

Peter. No, no !

Killian. And you killed Carter because he knew you were guilty and had started to give you away ! When the lights went out you were right next to him and next to the table where I had put the knife.

Peter. I shot Linsey, no one else. He had wrecked my home !

Killian (r.c.). And you stabbed these two other ! Admit it ! Damn you, talk ! I am going to make you talk !

(*Stepping towards* Peter *with his fist raised to strike as the door opens and* Professor Donovan *enters.*)

Jean (*rushing up to* Professor, c.). Professor ! Don't let them hurt him ! Don't let them hurt my father !

Professor (c.). No. (*He comes forward quietly* c.)

(Jean *up* l.c.)

Killian (*furious*). You keep out of this, Professor Donovan !

Professor. I am somewhat of a novice in such matters, Inspector Killian, but aren't " third degree " methods rather obsolete ?

Killian. So's war obsolete, or ought to be. Some day brains will rule the world and men like you will be its masters, but not quite yet. Just now you can beat the truth out of a crook quicker than you can pet it out of him—and I am going to get the truth !

Jean (*down in front of* Peter—r.c.). He isn't keeping anything back ! Not a thing !

Killian. Of course he is ! You all are ! If you are so anxious to spare your father, why don't you tell the truth yourself ?

Jean. I will !

Killian (*to* Roberts). Get Cornish !

Roberts. Right. (*He exits* c.)

(Killian *goes up and puts on lights.*)

Jean. I'll tell anything you ask me.

Killian. I don't know what started this thing here to-night, but I do know you are all of you mixed up in it, one way or another ! If I could get my fingers on one end of the string I'd soon unravel the whole tangle ! (*Coming* c.)

PROFESSOR. Jean has promised to help us, and I am sure she will.

(ROBERTS *enters with* DAVID.)

KILLIAN. All right—we will see! (*Turning on* JEAN.) Will you admit that you deliberately burned that hole through Mr. Cornish's cuff?

JEAN. Yes.

KILLIAN. To destroy a spot you had seen there?

JEAN (L.C.). Yes.

(DAVID *a step down.* PROFESSOR L.)

KILLIAN. A blood spot?

JEAN (*desperately*). David! They were threatening Father! I couldn't bear it!

KILLIAN (R.C.). A blood spot?

JEAN. Yes—forgive me, David!

DAVID. It's all right, dear.

JEAN (*to* DAVID). At first I thought you killed Jack Donovan, but I have had time to think—and I know you couldn't have done it! Tell me that you didn't, David!

DAVID (C.). Of course I didn't!

KILLIAN. Then why the gun?

DAVID. We had had trouble.

KILLIAN. About what?

JEAN (*crossing down in front of* KILLIAN. DAVID *starts to* JEAN). About that cat's-eye ring of Jack's! I am going to tell all the truth, David, it is the only way!

KILLIAN. That damned ring again!

PROFESSOR. But the ring is of no importance.

KILLIAN. But the damned thing was luminous! (*Crossing to* PROFESSOR.)

PROFESSOR. Radium paint. I have just come from the Professor. (*Looking at letter which he takes from pocket.*) This scrawl of Jack's was written last year when he was in the desert. It speaks—(*contemptuously*)—about two great magicians, one of whom was my son, making out of an old seal ring and some radium paint a thing they said "All women must obey."

DAVID (*up* C.). I thought so!

PROFESSOR. It seems, according to this absurd document, that any girl who once slips it on her finger must belong to its owner . . . they called it "The Master's Ring."

(JEAN—*turning to* DAVID.)

KILLIAN. There goes another clue. (*Up* C. *and turning.*)

JEAN (C.). I wonder. I've read about the curse put on jewels stolen from idols that have stood in old temples for over a thousand years.

Killian (L.C.). That's old stuff.

Jean. But mightn't there be as much danger from a curse put on this silly ring by these dirty-minded boys?

Professor (*sternly*, L.). My son, Jean!

Jean. Yes, Professor. I beg your pardon!

David (*crossing to* L.C. *to* Killian. Jean R.C.). But she is right! The harm in that ring was the use he tried to make of it! The boy was neurotic, degenerate, obscene! He thought he could go on putting that ring of his on the finger of every girl he met——

Killian. And he tried it with Miss Rankin, there?

Jean. Yes——

David. I made up my mind to take it away from him, and end it once for all, that is why I came here to-night—but as I have told you, some one got to him before I did——

Jean. That is the truth! You must believe it!

(Mary *comes from door* R.)

Mary. Inspector Killian!

Killian. Yes, Mary?

Mary. Mr. Linsey is conscious now. The doctor says it might be well for you to see him.

(Mary *exits door* R.)

Killian. Conscious! Good! He will talk, dying men always do.

(Jean *and* David *come together* C. Killian *down* R. *corner.*)

I am going to get the truth at last. I will give you just one more chance, you three—do you want to tell the whole story before he does?

Jean (C.). We have told all we know, haven't we, David?

David (C.). Yes.

Killian (R. *corner to* Peter). And you?

Peter (*sitting at table—bitterly*). A few hours ago I thought of myself as a respected and honourable man, in a happy home—I know nothing of all this crime and treachery! Nothing!

Killian. I don't believe you; you are all protecting one another because there isn't one of you who dares to face the truth; but before I'm through with you I am going to get it—all of it! Carney!

Carney. Yes. (*Crossing to door.*)

Killian. Take these two outside and put a man to guard them. I don't want them talking to the others. Come, Professor.

(Killian *and* Professor *exit* R.)

Jean. If Neil Linsey is conscious, Father, he may live, we must try to hope.

Peter. No—he is dying—I have killed him! It is very strange! I never thought such a thing would come to me!

CARNEY (*at door, sharply*). Don't talk, sir! You heard the Inspector!

PETER. Yes.

JEAN (*crosses to* DAVID). You don't blame me, David, for what I said?

DAVID. Of course not, dear.

PETER (*rising and crossing to* JEAN C.). She is just like her mother. What a fool I have been!

DAVID. Linsey isn't dead yet, sir. We have still that chance.

PETER. I can't seem to realize it. He fell when I fired—he didn't say a word.

CARNEY. No talking, if you please.

LYDIA (*enters from* L.). Peter.

(RUTH *enters from* R.)

JEAN. We must keep up our courage.

(JEAN *exits* L.—PETER *and* DAVID *exit* C. *with* CARNEY.)

LYDIA. How is he? (*Crossing to* L.C.)

RUTH (*half to herself—sitting on settee* R.). My children! What will become of my children?

LYDIA. Wake up, Mrs. Linsey! Don't be a fool! I want you to listen to me. (L. *of* C., *crossing to* RUTH *at settee* R.)

RUTH (*rising*). What chance will they have with this disgrace?

LYDIA. A better chance if you will control yourself!

RUTH. I hate you. Now at least I can say that, and it's worth a lot. I hate you!

LYDIA. Well, it isn't worth what it will cost you.

RUTH. I'll drag your name down into the dirt with his, worse than his?

LYDIA (*advancing on* RUTH—*firmly*). What you said about me and my connection with your husband was not true—you will say that it wasn't true when you have time to think it all over!

RUTH. Every one is going to know what I know, that you are lower than any woman who walks the streets!

LYDIA. If you are sane at all, you will listen!

RUTH (*sitting settee* R.). It began with you. All of it, all the devil that has poisoned the lives of every one of us! Poor Mr. Carter was the only one of us all who was free from blame—and he is dead!

LYDIA (*sitting* L. *of table* R.). It is because he is dead and we are alive that I have come to you . . .

RUTH. To get yourself off free! I don't know how, but I know you—I have good cause to know you.

LYDIA. You will have better cause to know me if you don't listen to me now. We can't help what has happened; that is past, all of it, but we can help the future!—if you——

Killian (*enters from up* R.). The doctor won't say much one way or the other, but it looks bad to me.

(Lydia *rises and crosses* L. *and sits settee* L.)

Ruth (*crossing up to door* R.). I must go to him!

Killian. He won't answer you! He is conscious but he won't say a word; we will leave him to the doctor for a while, but you can see him before they take him away.

Ruth. Take him away!

Killian. The doctor thinks he would do better at the hospital.

(Mary, Nelson, Jean *and* Ben *enter from* L.)

Ben (*firmly*). We have made up our minds, Inspector, to ask you to make any arrests you are going to make, and allow the rest of us to return to our homes.

Killian. Until I know more than I know now about what has been going on here I am going to detain all of you as material witnesses.

Ben (L.C.). Every citizen has certain definite rights, you know!

Killian (C.). Oh! You are a lawyer, Mr. Holt. I had almost forgotten that.

Ben. I am.

Killian. Then you can sue me, Mr. Holt, or write a letter about me to the newspapers, or you can go to hell for all I care!

(Killian *exits door* C.—Lydia *is* L.)

Anne (L.C.). Why doesn't he do what he is going to do, whatever it is?

Nelson (*crossing to desk* R.—*at table*). Well, you can't blame him so very much, Mrs. Holt, for not knowing what to do.

Jean (*crossing to desk* L.). It isn't his fault. The trouble is there are so many threads that he can't gather them all together. Sometimes I think it would be the best thing if we, all of us, told the truth.

The Positions are:

Nelson. Not the best thing for *all* of us, Miss Jean. There were twelve of us there in the dining-room when Mrs. Rankin told me to put those lights out. (*Looking about.*) There are seven of us left. There will be one less before we are through.

Ben (*up* C.). Nelson, what do you mean by that?

Nelson. Your father didn't kill Jack Donovan, miss. He had

no idea of what had been going on there in this house; and I have good reason to think Mr. Cornish didn't do it. So it is here among the seven of us.

BEN (*thoughtfully*). Unless Neil Linsey——

RUTH (R. *corner*). No! No! (*As door opens.*)

(*Men enter.*)

JEAN (*to* RUTH). Hush!

(CARNEY *enters with* ROBERTS *with a stretcher from* C.)

CARNEY. In here.

(CARNEY *and* ROBERTS *move up to door* R.)

RUTH. You are going to take him now?

CARNEY. Yes, as soon as the doctor is ready.

(CARNEY *exits with* ROBERTS *door* R.)

(BEN *crosses to below door* R.)

RUTH (*crossing to* C. *in front of table—to* LYDIA). You did this! If he dies, you did it!

LYDIA. He is, so Mr. Holt tell us, at least ten thousand dollars short in his accounts!

(ANNE L.—MARY *up* L.)

BEN. More than that by now.

LYDIA (C. *to* RUTH). Can you pay it? You will have to, you know, whether he lives or dies!

RUTH. How can I pay it?

LYDIA. There's your house, of course.

JEAN. Father won't let the bank take her home.

LYDIA (*to* JEAN). Your father is not in a position just now to say what shall be done! I am the one to say that! (*Down to* RUTH.) When they take your husband out through this room, Mrs. Linsey, I want you to stop them for a moment, I have something to say to him. (*Crossing to* RUTH C.)

RUTH (*fiercely*). You!

LYDIA. Yes, and you listen to what I say and take your cue from me.

RUTH. You think I'll do that?

LYDIA. I know you will, for the same reason that you have kept quiet for the last two months; because the only thing you really care for in the world is your children, and unless you help me now I'll surely make you pay?

JEAN (*indignantly*). Mr. Holt! Can she?

BEN. If your father has allowed her to get as much control into her hands as I suspect he has, she can do it.

LYDIA. And will do it! (*Turning on* JEAN.) I have paid a

little too much for the honour of being your father's wife to be laughed at now, or to be the subject of a scandal! If Neil Linsey dies my husband will be convicted of murder—I don't propose to be convicted of adultery!

Jean (*crossing to* Lydia). Although you are guilty of it! I knew it from the first! Now you know why I hated you. (*Back of table.*)

(Carney *and the men bring* Neil *in on stretcher, the* Professor *following.*)

Lydia (c.). Professor! Mr. Killian agreed that Mrs. Linsey might speak to her husband for a moment, before he went.

Professor (*doubtfully*). I am not at all sure——

Lydia. He promised, Professor——

Professor. Put him down! (*The stretcher is put down* c.) Now, Mrs. Linsey!

Lydia (l. *of* Neil. *At couch*). Neil! Neil! Ruth has something to say to you.

Neil. I—I——

Lydia. Listen, Neil! You must listen!

Ruth (r. *of* Neil. *Fiercely*). Let him alone!

Lydia. Neil! Listen to me!

Professor. You told us, Mrs. Rankin, that Mrs. Linsey wanted to speak for a moment to her husband.

Lydia. She does!

Professor (*sternly*). Then let *her* speak to him.

Lydia. Very well! Speak to him, Mrs. Linsey!

Ruth (*after a pause*). Neil!

Neil (*opening his eyes*). Ruth?

Ruth. Yes.

Neil. I've made an awful mess of things!

Lydia. It will be all right, Mr. Linsey. I am going to help you. I am going to help your wife, and your children.

Neil. You—you promise.

Lydia. Yes——

Neil. Ruth!

Lydia. I knew that you were in trouble at the bank; when my husband found it out you quarrelled and he shot you——

Neil. And you are going to help Ruth, and the kids? (*Holding his hands out to* Ruth.)

Lydia. If you tell the truth! That my husband quarrelled with you because of trouble over money matters—there was nothing else!

Carney. Excuse me, Professor, but we can't have this!——

Professor. No! Take him up!

Lydia. Just a moment, please!

Professor. No. Take him out.

(*The men pick* Neil *up on the stretcher.*)

LYDIA (*to* NEIL *as he passes in stretcher*). I only want him to tell the truth, that there was nothing else, just a quarrel about money!

(DR. MORRIS *enters from* R.)

PROFESSOR (R.C.). Go on!

(CARNEY *and* ROBERTS *take out* NEIL *on stretcher* C.)

This is a bad business, Mrs. Rankin, I don't know what to make of it!

JEAN (L. *of* LYDIA). Will he live? It means so much to poor Father.

(RUTH *up* C.)

PROFESSOR. He has a chance, that's all we can say just now. They can tell better after they get him to the hospital.

(*He exits with* DOCTOR C.—JEAN *and* LYDIA C. *to* L.—*Pause.*)

JEAN (R.C. *to* LYDIA). So you are going to get yourself out free, no matter what all the rest of us have to pay?

LYDIA. If he lives, and he is going to live, what can they do to a man of your father's position? (*Crossing to* L. *of table.*) I am thinking of what is to be the future of the rest of us, after this is over.

NELSON (*at table* R.). There's one of us, anyway, that is going to be taken good care of, after this is over. A nice, long, steady job, with room and meals provided.

LYDIA (R.C.—*sternly*). You are forgetting yourself, Nelson!

(BEN R. *corner*—RUTH *sitting settee* R.)

NELSON. That I am a servant? (*Rises.*) Yes, I am afraid I am forgetting that. Death isn't the only thing that makes us all equal.

LYDIA. What do you mean?

NELSON. I can't help thinking, Mrs. Rankin, if you will excuse me for saying it, here we are, seven of us shut up here together. They start drilling at us, questioning us, and a little at a time they began finding out that most of us had something hidden behind these masks of ours. Since that boy was stabbed in the dark one other man is dead, and one is dying, two men out there are facing prison. Some of us in here don't look quite so pretty as we did before they turned the light full on us. I wonder if it would be the same with any crowd—have all of us some hidden thing we are trying to cover up?

BEN (*down* R., *sternly*). Nelson! How much do you know about the truth of all this?

NELSON. There is a lot I don't know, Mr. Holt, but I have put some things together. (*Sitting above table* R.)

LYDIA (*sharply*). Put what together?

Nelson. This! (*Taking a long envelope out of his pocket.*) I have here some pieces of a woman's letter, very neatly pasted together.

Lydia. What woman's letter?

Nelson. That is the question! (Anne *rises.*) The letter is quite complete—(Lydia *moves*)—with the exception of the signature—but I may say that it was written to Jack Donovan by one of the ladies now present in this room.

Lydia (r.c.). Jack Donovan received many letters from women. I have written notes to him myself, so I imagine have all the rest of us. Who wrote the letter you have there?

(Ruth *sitting at top of table.*)

Nelson (*sitting above table*). When the police find that out the writer will go from here to prison to be tried for her life. That is why you ladies were all asked for samples of your handwriting. Just at present, however, the police do not know which of you wrote the letter.

Lydia (*sternly*). But you know.

Nelson. Yes, I know—but there is still one thing I don't know, Mrs. Rankin—and when I find that out everything will be settled very definitely.

Lydia. I know you, Nelson! You are a stubborn, cruel fanatic, as dangerous to those you love as you are to those you hate! I order you to let me see that letter!

Nelson. No!

Lydia. Nelson!

Nelson. No! (*Rising.*) Most of you people have been forced to show your hands. Up to now I haven't shown a card!

(*The door at back opens and* Killian *enters* c.—Lydia *crosses down* r. *and up* r.)

Killian (*sternly*). What is the meaning of this, Mrs. Linsey? I tried to get a statement from your husband before they took him to the hospital and he absolutely denied the truth of the story you told just before he was shot.

Lydia. You mean he denies the truth of Mrs. Linsey's statement concerning me?

Killian. I do! I mean just that!

Lydia. He was right. Tell him so, Mrs. Linsey.

Ruth. I was wrong. I shouldn't have said it, it wasn't true.

Killian (*furiously*). Wait a minute!

Ruth. It wasn't true!

Killian. All right! If that's the way you want to play the game I'll play it with you! I'll put the screws on! Go into the next room, I'll take you one at a time! You stay, Nelson! The rest of you wait in there!

(Jean, Mary, Lydia, Ruth *move up to the door* l.)

BEN. Just a moment, Mr. Killian!

KILLIAN. No! Go in there! All of you!

BEN. I want to talk to you a moment, Mr. Killian. Don't you think you are going beyond your rights?

(BEN *crosses to him.*)

KILLIAN. Go in there. (KILLIAN *turns to* NELSON.) I'm damned if I ever got into such a mess! (*To* NELSON.) Where are those samples of handwriting——

NELSON. I have them here, sir——

(*As they cross to exit,* ANNE *is last. All of the others go through the door* L., *but* ANNE *stops, and quickly dodges back of the screen.* NELSON *has been at work at table.* KILLIAN R.C. PROFESSOR *enters at* C.)

PROFESSOR. Inspector Killian?

(NELSON *at table* R.)

KILLIAN (R.C.). Well?

PROFESSOR (R.C.). Before they put him into the ambulance, I've an idea it would be a good thing if you were to have another word with Mr. Linsey.

KILLIAN (R.C.). Dying?

PROFESSOR. No, as a matter of fact, he seems better; it was what Mrs. Rankin said, I think, that she would look after his wife and children. It seemed to put heart into him. I'm sure he would talk now; in fact he as much as told me so.

KILLIAN. Good. Come on.

PROFESSOR. You'll be careful, of course; he hasn't much strength.

(NELSON *follows* KILLIAN *and* PROFESSOR *to door* C., *looks out, crosses to table and sits* R. *of same with his back to audience.*)

KILLIAN. Of course, I know. I'll look after that.

(PROFESSOR *and* KILLIAN *exit.*)

(ANNE *comes slowly out from back of the screen and looks desperately at* NELSON. *She crosses slowly to fireplace and picks up scissors from basket and crosses slowly toward* NELSON. *At this moment the door opens and* BEN *enters.*)

BEN. Anne!

(ANNE *gives a low cry and drops the scissors.* NELSON *jumps up and turns.* BEN *crosses slowly to* ANNE.)

ANNE. Ben, he—he has something there of mine. Make him give it to me.

BEN. Anne!

Anne (c. *to* l.). Don't ask me questions, not if you love me, Ben.

Ben (l.c.). The letter they spoke about, you wrote it to Jack Donovan?

Anne. Yes, Ben!

Ben. Go in there! (*Pointing to room* l.)

Anne. I must have it! (*To* Nelson.)

Ben (*sternly*). Go in there. (*She looks at him and drops her head and exits.* Ben *follows* Anne *to door and closes it.* Nelson *picks up scissors* c. Ben *turns on* Nelson.) I want that letter! (*Crossing to* c.)

Nelson. Yes, sir, and if I am any judge, Mrs. Rankin also wanted it, and one other—so you see, sir, so many people write letters to-day that they regret to-morrow.

Ben. I'll give you a hundred dollars for that letter, Nelson.

Nelson. It may be worth more than that to me. (r.c.)

Ben. We have only been married a few months, Nelson, and I love her. She has been keeping something from me, but I trust her; it's up to me to protect her.

Nelson. And it's up to me to protect another.

Ben (c.). Nelson! You——

(*Stepping fiercely toward* Nelson, *who calmly shows scissors.* Ben *stops.* Killian *enters.*)

Killian. Holt—Mr. Linsey has just made a statement to me—he tells me that ten minutes before you all went into dinner to-night Jack Donovan came to him and asked his protection.

Ben. Well?

Killian. From you! Donovan told him that when you were here in this room just after his arrival here, that you said to him, "When we leave this place to-night, Donovan, I am going to follow you, no matter where you go; I am going to teach you that there is one woman here in this house that you can't put your dirty hands on."

Ben. Yes, that's just what I said!

Killian. Good. I am going to take you down town with the others; for the present, go in there.

Ben. All right. (*Exits by door* l.)

Killian (c.). I can't place Holt in this, but he is in it somewhere! I'm sure of that.

Nelson (r., *grimly*). Very much in it, sir.

Killian (*moving to* r.c.). If we knew who wrote that letter you have there the rest would be easy. Give it to me. I'll put a good handwriting man on it!

Nelson (*at table—hesitates*). I had hoped you would let me work this out for myself, sir.

Killian. No, I'll take it! (*Taking letter and sitting on end of*

settee R.C.). The whole case may hang on this. When we find this woman the rest is easy.

NELSON. Do you think so, sir? To me it seems to be growing more and more difficult all the time.

KILLIAN. One of these women was mixed up with young Donovan, one of the men was sore and got him.

NELSON. But which one, sir?

KILLIAN. David Cornish, if you ask me!

NELSON. What about the ring, sir? If he took it, why was it found later in another man's pocket?

KILLIAN. He knew he was about to be searched and he dropped it in there to get rid of it.

NELSON. And where is it now? It was on the table there, and some one took it. How could David Cornish have done that?

KILLIAN (*rising—troubled*). I don't know. (*Crossing to* C.)

NELSON (*very quietly*). The one who took the ring did all the rest, I am sure of it! Everywhere you turn in this affair, Mr. Killian, you will find this ring.

KILLIAN (L.C.). Are you keeping anything back, Nelson?

NELSON (R.C.). No, sir, only—only I think there have been other people in this house to-night.

KILLIAN. What people?

NELSON. I didn't mention it before, but I felt sure I heard queer footsteps in the room overhead, sir. Just as we were serving dinner, soft footfalls, like people walking in their stockinged feet.

KILLIAN. What?

NELSON (C.—*simply*). I looked, but I couldn't see anybody—then in the dark, both times, when these men were killed, I heard the same soft, padded footsteps—and both times, sir, I felt a draught of air, as though a door or a window had been opened!

KILLIAN. You wait! (*He puts the folded letter in the inside pocket of his coat and turns and crosses to the window and fastens it.*) The whole place outside is guarded. No one could come in this way.

NELSON (C.). No, sir. It couldn't be in the fireplace?

KILLIAN. Let's see. (*Crossing and looking at fireplace and ringing bell.*) I don't think it is possible for anyone to come down there, and if they did I'm damned sure they couldn't get up again.

NELSON (C.). But the ring, sir! The only time it could have been taken was when you were behind the screen——

KILLIAN. If it was ever taken at all! (*Going up to screen.*) I haven't searched this room yet, and I am going to do it! It's a hundred times more likely to be here somewhere on the floor. Carney!

CARNEY (*enters* C.). Yes, sir.

KILLIAN. Lock that door a minute! (*Pointing to the door* L.)

(CARNEY *crosses and locks it.*)

Then you stay outside in the hall and keep the door shut, nobody is to come in until I tell you.

CARNEY. All right, Inspector.

(*Exits to hall* C., *shutting the door.*)

KILLIAN. Now I want that ring! It's luminous and it gives out light enough so we can't possibly miss it in the dark! You look along the floor, in the corners and everywhere. (*He steps to the light switch.*) I am going to put the lights out, Nelson.

NELSON. Very well, sir.

(KILLIAN *switches off and all lights go out. For a moment there is silence.*)

KILLIAN. Carney!

(*A chair is overturned and a large brass tray on the table falls to the floor with a harsh, metallic clatter.* CARNEY *opens the door and runs in.*)

CARNEY. What is it? What's up?

(*Switching on the lights.* KILLIAN *is thrown back half over the table, his coat has been torn open.* NELSON *is stretched out on his back at* L., *a splash of blood on his forehead.*)

KILLIAN (*staggering to his feet*). Put up those lights—He—he—almost had me, Carney!

CARNEY (*helping* KILLIAN *from off the table*). What was it, sir?

KILLIAN. I don't know! (*Crossing with* CARNEY *and bending over* NELSON—*rolling him over on his back—at* L.C. KILLIAN, *shocked.*) They've got him too! No, he's coming round.

NELSON. I——

KILLIAN. How are you, old man?

NELSON. Did you hear it, sir? (*Sitting up.*) Those padded footsteps?

KILLIAN. Some confounded hocus-pocus! Look what they did to me! Look at my coat!

(CARNEY *helps* NELSON *on to settee* L., *gets him some water from up* C. KILLIAN *puts his hand to his pocket with a sudden thought. He speaks.*)

That letter! The girl's letter. They got it from my pocket!

CARNEY. Who did?

KILLIAN. How the hell do I know? Follow the chimney flow up to the roof—— This thing is getting too deep for me, and there is just one way to settle it—get the police van at the door, Carney, then bring those two prisoners in, and we will make a clean sweep of the whole crowd! Look sharp!

CARNEY. Yes, sir. (*He exits.*)

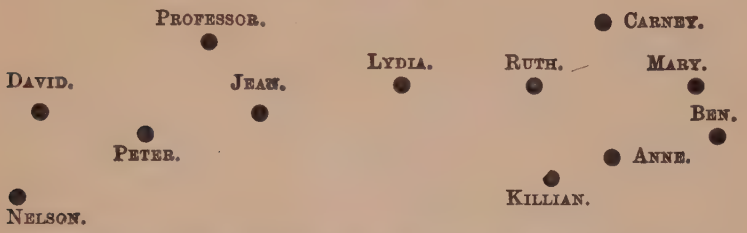
KILLIAN (*crossing and unlocking the door* L.). Come in here—all of you! (*All enter talking—ad lib.*) Don't talk, now. Just you all listen to me! Just a few minutes ago in this room——

(CARNEY *enters with* PETER *and* DAVID *from door* R.)

PROFESSOR (*enters* C.). I have just come from the hospital, Inspector.

KILLIAN. Well?

The Positions are:



PROFESSOR. The doctors there say that there is little doubt but what Mr. Linsey will fully recover.

JEAN. Father! You hear! (*Crossing to* R. *of her father.*)

PETER. Yes, dear! It means so much to me!

LYDIA (R.C.). At least it means an end to this petty tyranny! Of course he will refuse to appear against you! I doubt if even Mr. Killian will dare to hold you now.

(KILLIAN *crosses* L.)

KILLIAN. You are a lucky man, Mr. Rankin, but you are not out of the wood yet, you are an accessory to the murder of Jack Donovan and you are mixed up in the murder of Horace Carter!

PETER. I deny that, absolutely!

KILLIAN. Oh yes, you are, so are all the rest of you! Is there any one of you here who dares to come out with the inside story of what was going on here in this house! No! Not one! Carney! Take them all down town!

ANNE (*afraid*). Ben!

BEN. Hold on a minute!

KILLIAN. I'll give you one chance. I want the woman Jack Donovan really was mixed up with. (*Looking at* ANNE, JEAN, LYDIA.) Turn her over to me and I'll let the other women go.

RUTH (*rises*). You hear him!

DAVID. Tell him, Jean! You must!

JEAN (*desperately*). I can't. (*Sits.*)

ANNE. It wasn't *me*! I tell you it wasn't *me*!

RUTH (*to* C.). If no one else speaks, I am going to! Do you think I ever took my eyes off of this awful house? Don't you suppose I know what was going on here?

KILLIAN. Now we are getting started! Come on! Let's have it all!

BEN (*crossing to* C. *a step*). Wait a minute! Some one here is

guilty, and others of us have been afraid to tell what we know for fear of getting the wrong person into trouble, but we are all of us in trouble now and we have got to face the facts!

Killian. Of course you have!

Ben (*crossing to* Killian L.). I propose that you leave us alone in this room for ten minutes, Mr. Killian. At the end of that time we will turn the guilty one over to you!

Killian. Throw the lame wolf to the pack, eh?

Ben. Just that!

Killian. I am going to take him at his word, Professor!

Professor (C.). You mean, to save themselves they will betray each other!

Killian (L.). Of course they will! Ten minutes, ladies and gentlemen, is all the time you have! Is it enough? I think so! All you have to do is strip the lies and hypocrisy away from each other, then sell me what is left. I'll give you your freedom for it—that is, all but one of you!

Ben. We will do it! We've got to do it!

Jean. We must do it, what else can we do?

Killian. You are right, because the one who did this thing hasn't a chance on earth to get away with it! I think I know already the one I want, but your way, Mr. Holt, is the quickest!

Professor (*crossing down* C.). But we have found out nothing! Absolutely nothing!

Killian. Don't forget that there have been two mistakes made here! The cat's-eye ring and the woman's letter have both been stolen from me. Search each other if you want to, find out who has them—add that to the information you have been hiding from me, and you won't be long in doubt! (*Crossing up* C.) Come, Professor—you have just ten minutes, then one, or all of you, must take a little ride down town!

(Killian *and* Professor *exit* C. *door.*)

Peter (*at table*). What Inspector Killian says is true. He puts it baldly, but facts are facts! We must throw the lame wolf to the pack!

Ben. I didn't kill anybody, and I'm damned if I'll go to jail to protect the one who did!

Anne. We can't be disgraced, Ben! We couldn't hold our heads up again, ever!

Peter. It is absurd to think that we can all sacrifice ourselves for one!

Ben. To begin with, the one who took the letter he speaks of, and the ring, must give them up!

Peter. I insist on that! Otherwise we shall all be searched again—these articles must be returned! (*Crossing down to* R. *corner.*)

Ben. We will make that easy for the one who took them.

ANNE. What do you mean, Ben?

BEN. In one minute from now I want to find that ring and the letter here on the table, and I am going to give you a chance to put them here—in the dark! (*Stepping to light switch.*) We must all play fair! No one of us must try to find out who returns them! No one of us must move until the lights go on again!

(BEN *switches off and the lights go out. The luminous ring is seen.*) (*Now all have moved away from table.*)

JEAN. Look!

BEN. Quiet!

PETER. There! By the screen!

(BEN *moves in the dark with the ring.*)

JEAN. The ring!

BEN. Don't move! (*The ring moves toward table and stops.*) When I count three I'll put the lights up! One! Two! Three!

(NELSON L.C. *corner.—The lights go on, all are in their places, but the ring and the envelope containing the letter are on the table.*)

DAVID. The letter—(*crossing to the table*)—and the ring!

PETER. Which one of you put them there? (*Moving to* C.)

BEN. They won't answer that.

(DAVID *crosses to window and opens curtains.*)

But we can find out.

(*Picking up the ring—at table.* ANNE *crosses to* L.C.)

Which one of you women took this ring from Jack Donovan and wore it! (*Crossing to* C.)

NELSON (*still* L. *corner*). I wouldn't ask that question, sir, not if I were you!

BEN. But I do ask it! I know there was a flirtation between Donovan and my wife; I think that is all there was, but if I am wrong I want to know it!

ANNE. Oh, Ben! (*Sitting near screen up* L.C.)

NELSON. The pack is off! God help the lame wolf!

PETER (*up* R.). It is the truth we want, no matter who it hurts!

LYDIA (*crossing down* R.C.). Of course it is!

RUTH (*to her*). Why don't you tell it, then! In plain words, the woman they want is the woman who was Jack Donovan's mistress!

BEN (*amazed*). You mean that she was that?

RUTH. I do!

PETER. Oh——

RUTH (L.). Why should that surprise you? If she betrayed you, why shouldn't she betray the man she robbed me of?

(PETER *crosses up* L. LYDIA *is* R.C.)

Jean (*front of table* R.). Jack came here almost every day! I hated him, he knew that, but, well as I knew you (*turning on* Lydia), I never dared to think that was why he came. (*Sitting front of table.*)

Peter (*crossing to* Lydia). Is that true?

Ruth (L.C.). One night, ten days ago, my husband telephoned that he must stay in New York on business. I didn't believe him, and I watched this house. Long after the lights were out I saw Jack Donovan come cautiously to the side veranda and enter through those windows there!

Peter (*fiercely*). You listen to what I am going to say——

Lydia (C.). Just a moment, if you please! I am not in a mood to listen to your regrets at having married me—perhaps I share in some of those regrets myself—but although I am supposed to have come from a different class from the rest of you ladies here, I find we have one thing in common after all. I have no more desire than the rest of you to go to prison! I think I know who killed Jack Donovan, and I am going to save myself in the Judas fashion, just as all the rest of you are trying to do!

(Ruth *crosses down* L. *and sits.* Lydia *crosses and turns up the rug, under which, on her first entrance in Act I, she had hidden a small blood-stained handkerchief. She stoops and picks this up and holds it out.*)

This is my handkerchief. I dropped it, I think, on my way into dinner. After the police came I found it with these bloodstains on it hidden under the ferns in the flower centrepiece on the table. (*Moving down to settee* R.)

Ben. And you know how it got there?

The Positions are:

Lydia. It was put there, of course, by the girl who killed Jack Donovan.

(Jean *rises.* David *moves to her.*)

The girl who opened those windows to him night after night. Come, Mary, I am sorry, but it is time to tell the truth.

Mary (*coming down*). No! No!

Jean. Not Mary!

Mary. No, Miss Jean! Please don't think that; I loved him, but I didn't kill him! Anybody could see that I couldn't kill him—he was my husband!

Jean. Mary!

MARY (NELSON *moves up a little*). We were married two weeks ago, but we had quarrelled, and I had written him a letter—that one there, I think—telling him I couldn't stand it any more, but to-night, just before dinner, we made it up! In his heart I knew he loved me! I knew he did!

BEN. You were standing by Nelson when the lights were put out! Linsey said some one went back of his chair in the dark! You were the one, Mary?

MARY. He had asked me to come to his room to-night. I had often been there since we were married; he had been trying to slip me the latchkey while I was serving, and I knew he had it in his hand.

BEN. Go on!

MARY. When the lights went out I ran around the table, and put out my hand and touched his arm; it was all blood, and he was all blood, and he was all slumped down in his chair. I was afraid and turned and ran back and stumbled in the dark.

DAVID. That is when she caught me by the arm!

MARY. Yes. I had picked up Mrs. Rankin's handkerchief and I wiped my hand on it. After the lights went on I saw it was blood, so I—I hid it just where she said I did! (*Sinking on to the settee* L. *and sobbing.*)

BEN. Well, I guess that clears the rest of us; she killed him, of course.

PETER. I am afraid so. (*Crossing down* L.) Call the Inspector, Mr. Holt, and tell him the story.

BEN. Suppose you do it, sir. I don't know that I care to be the one to turn this poor girl over to him.

PETER. No! I absolutely refuse. (*Crossing up again* R.C.)

NELSON (*crossing to* C.). I'll tell him, sir. Mary and I are old friends and I want to make things as easy as I can for her.

MARY (*rising and advancing to* L.C.). But I didn't kill him, Nelson! Surely you will believe me?

NELSON. I know how sensitive you all are, and how very painful this must be for all of you. Suppose you all retire to the next room and let me call the Inspector—he seems to place some confidence in me—and see what can be done for this poor girl.

PETER. A very good idea, Nelson—

(NELSON *crossing up* R. *of door* C.)

much the best way out of a very disagreeable situation.

BEN. I think so, too.

(BEN *and* ANNE *exit door* L.)

JEAN (*crossing to* PETER *at* C.). But Mary says she didn't do it! Surely we can't all desert her.

DAVID (*crossing to* JEAN R.C.). No, that wouldn't be fair.

Peter. Come! All of you! Later we will see what can be done. Poor Mary! (*Exits with* David.)

(Lydia *exits.*)

(Ruth *exits.*)

Mary (Nelson *crosses back of them and shuts door* L. *and turns the key in the lock*). Why did you lock that door? Why do you look at me that way?

Nelson. Keep your voice down! Speak low! (*Crossing quickly and locking the door at* C., *putting key in his pocket.*)

Mary (Nelson *switches out lights, leaving standard lamp and small lamp up* R.C. *alight*). Don't you come near me! (*She shrinks back as* Nelson *crosses slowly down to her.*)

Nelson. His wife! You did that to me!

Mary. Keep away from me!

Nelson. A little while ago I said there would be one less before we were through! I didn't name the one—— Can you guess, Mary! Can you? I loved her ever since she was a little girl, and she led me on, used me—fooled me—I thought myself cleverer than any of you, but you are the clever one—— You lied to me all your life, but you ain't going to lie to me any more!

Mary. Nelson! (*Front of table* R.)

Nelson. I knew Donovan had set his filthy mind on winning you; you lied to me, you know, swore you loved me, not him! Do you remember that, Mary—only two days ago? And you were his wife then, you liar!

Mary. I was afraid of you, I always have been afraid of you.

Nelson. But never with so much cause as now.

Mary. You are like a devil, like a fiend!

Nelson. If you raise your voice again I'll kill you just as I killed Jack Donovan here to-night, just as I killed that other fool who found me out.

Mary. You killed Jack! You did it! Jack loved you, and you killed him.

Nelson. Yes.

Mary (*calling*). Mr. Killian——

Nelson. But you are not going to squeal on me. There have been just two big things in my life, Mary—my hate of him, and my love for you, and I have had to hide them both—but now we'll hide nothing—— Now I am going to do what I have always dreamed of doing! I am going to take you into my arms, Mary!

Mary. You are mad! I warned Jack that you were a madman!

Nelson. Just once, Mary, I am going to put my arms around you. (*He steps toward her, she gets back of table* R. *on which there is a property break-away lamp.*)

Mary. Help! Help!

(NELSON *throws the table over, the lamp falls and breaks, the top of table also breaks; as the lamp goes out one half of stage lights go down,* MARY *backs up stage,* NELSON *follows her slowly.*)

NELSON. No one can come in time! I am going to break you in my arms!

(JEAN *comes from behind screen and runs to door of room* L. *and tries to open same.*)

Now, Mary! (*Springing forward and crushing her to him.* MARY *screams.*)

(*When police whistle comes—*JEAN *starts pounding on* C. *door.*)

MARY. Help!

(JEAN *runs to* NELSON *and tries to break his hold on* MARY. NELSON *lets go of* MARY, *who falls to floor.* NELSON *turns and catches* JEAN. MARY *crawls toward door, screaming; her hair is down, and while she was crushed in* NELSON'S *arms she has contrived to put blood on her face; she gets to her feet, holding herself by another table up at back. This table is really a stand on which is placed an elaborate break-away bronze statue.* NELSON *throws* JEAN *off and she staggers to* L., *almost falling, and catching the back of a chair to save herself.* NELSON *springs at* MARY, *throwing the stand and the break-away statue over with a crash. He drags her to large table and throws her back over it, knocking the second of the break-away lamps over—the stage is now lit by one remaining lamp—shouts and pounding on doors outside keeps up.* NELSON *bends* MARY *back over table, one hand on her throat, with the other hand he picks up the desk telephone and raises it by the small end, like a club—to brain her.* JEAN *runs at him crying, "No! No!" She catches his upraised arm just as he tries to strike and clings to it. The large glass window at* R. *crashes in and* KILLIAN, CARNEY, PROFESSOR *and* ROBERTS *run in.*)

(CARNEY *switches on lights.*)

KILLIAN. Quick, boys!

(*They throw themselves on* NELSON. MARY *rolls off desk to floor, and gets up, clinging to desk.* PROFESSOR *crosses and supports her. Door at* L. *breaks in and* DAVID *enters, followed by all.* JEAN *runs to his arms. The two policemen hold* NELSON *as* KILLIAN *takes handcuffs out of his pocket.*)

KILLIAN. Nelson—I thought so.

MARY. He killed him, he killed my husband.

NELSON. But not Mary. She's beaten me, she has always beaten me——

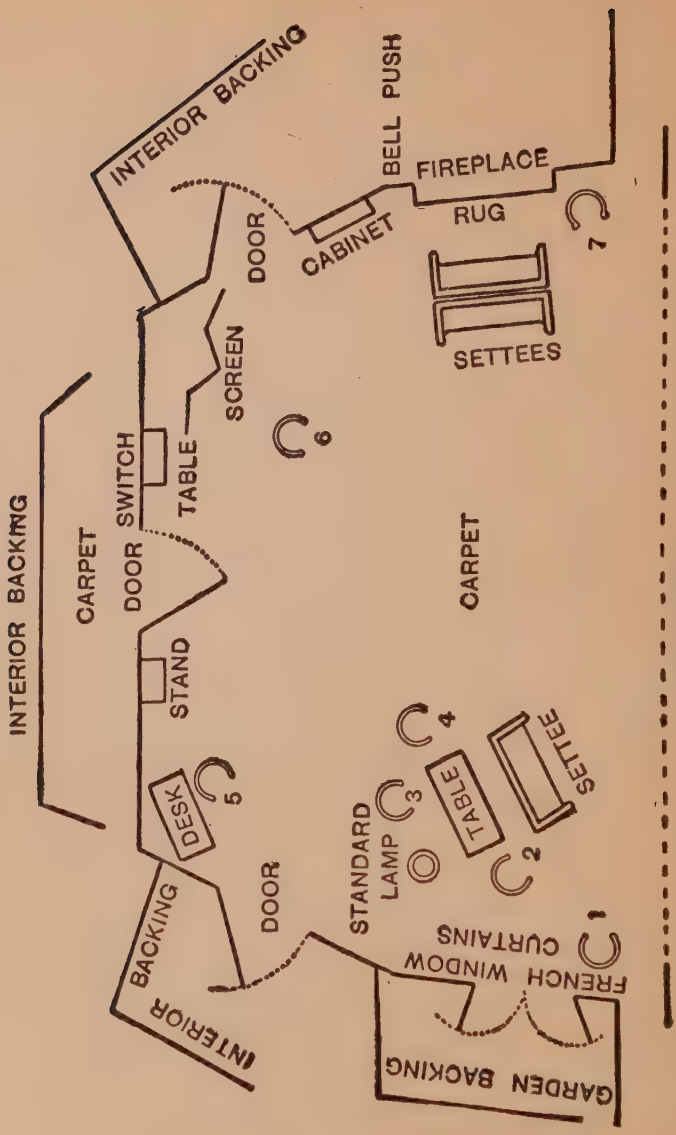
(*Enter* PROFESSOR.)

Killian. That's all right, Nelson—now we'll take that little ride down town.

Professor. Nelson, it can't be Nelson.

Killian. Why not, it had to be somebody, didn't it?

Curtain.


INTERIOR BACKING
BELL PUSH
FIREPLACE
RUG
CABINET
DOOR
SETTEES
7
SCREEN
6
TABLE
SWITCH
DOOR
CARPET
INTERIOR BACKING
STAND
CARPET
FOOTLIGHTS
DESK
5
4
SETTEE
TABLE
3
STANDARD LAMP
2
1
CURTAINS
FRENCH WINDOW
DOOR
INTERIOR BACKING
GARDEN BACKING

FURNITURE PLOT

(See Ground Plan of Scene.)

Carpet.
Rugs about stage (hearthrug at fireplace).
Settee R.C.
Two settees back to back in front of fireplace.
Table R.C.
Desk up R.
Stand with small lamp to break, up R.C.
Table up L.C.
Screen up L.C.
Cabinet L. above fireplace.
1. Chair.
2. Chair.
3. Chair.
4. Chair.
5. Armchair, small.
6. Armchair, small.
7. Chair.
Light switch L. of door C.
Bell-push above fireplace.
Heavy curtains to French window.
Standard lamp R.

PROPERTY PLOT

ACT I

One short-bladed game- or poultry-knife with highly polished silver handle.
One game-knife, same as above, except that its blade is bent at right angle to fit into CARTER'S shirt bosom.
One cup, containing a little wet carmine to simulate blood, fastened to right upper corner at back of chair on which CARTER sits at end of Act I. There is a sponge in the cup.
A stiff-bosomed dress shirt for CARTER, with slit over the heart to admit knife blade.
A gold ring (man's size) set with a large oval white stone—"the cat's-eye ring."
Two small flashlights, fountain-pen size, with lenses coloured light green to represent the cat's-eye ring in dark scenes.
1 carafe with water to drink and a glass on stand L. of C. door.
Blood-stained lady's handkerchief for LYDIA.
One short heavy revolver, loaded with blank cartridges, carried by CARNEY.

ACT II

One silver pencil (round) to be rolled on floor from behind screen by KILLIAN.
One card, carried by DAVID.
One police whistle, carried by KILLIAN.
One pair of handcuffs (CARNEY).

One tin dispatch-box with papers (PROFESSOR).
One large envelope containing torn bits of blue and white notepaper.
One tube of library paste in desk up L.
Several sheets of legal-sized paper in desk up R.
Matches, ash-tray, pen, ink, paper and desk-pad on table R.
Several white handkerchiefs—(one for each performance)—for NELSON.
One large reading-glass (CARNEY) off up R.

ACT III

One ambulance stretcher off up C.
One pair large scissors in basket on table up L.
Carmine grease-paint smear under seat of bench L. (for NELSON).
Fountain-pen flashlight for BEN.
Break-away lamp or statuette on stand up R.C.
Break-away chair.

LIGHTING PLOT

ACT I

Opening.—All out on stage. Strong blue outside window R. on. Back of centre door on.

Cues.—1. Door C. opens.—Foots up very little.
2. Light in room L. on—Foots up more.
3. Door C. closes—Foots down a little.
4. Door L. closes—Foots out.
5. Switch.—All up full.
6. Switch—Black Out.
7. Switch—Up full.

ACT II

Lights up full all through.

ACT III

Opening.—Foots up one-third—Amber spot on settee R.C.
2. Switch—Up full.
3. Switch—Black Out.
4. Switch—Up full.
5. Switch—All lights on stage out except three blue spots covering right of stage as coming from window R. Blue outside of window on.
6. Switch—All up full.
7. Switch—Lights out with the exception of lamps down R. and up R.
8. 1st lamp out.
9. 2nd lamp out.
10. Blue flood from window.
11. Switch—All lights up.

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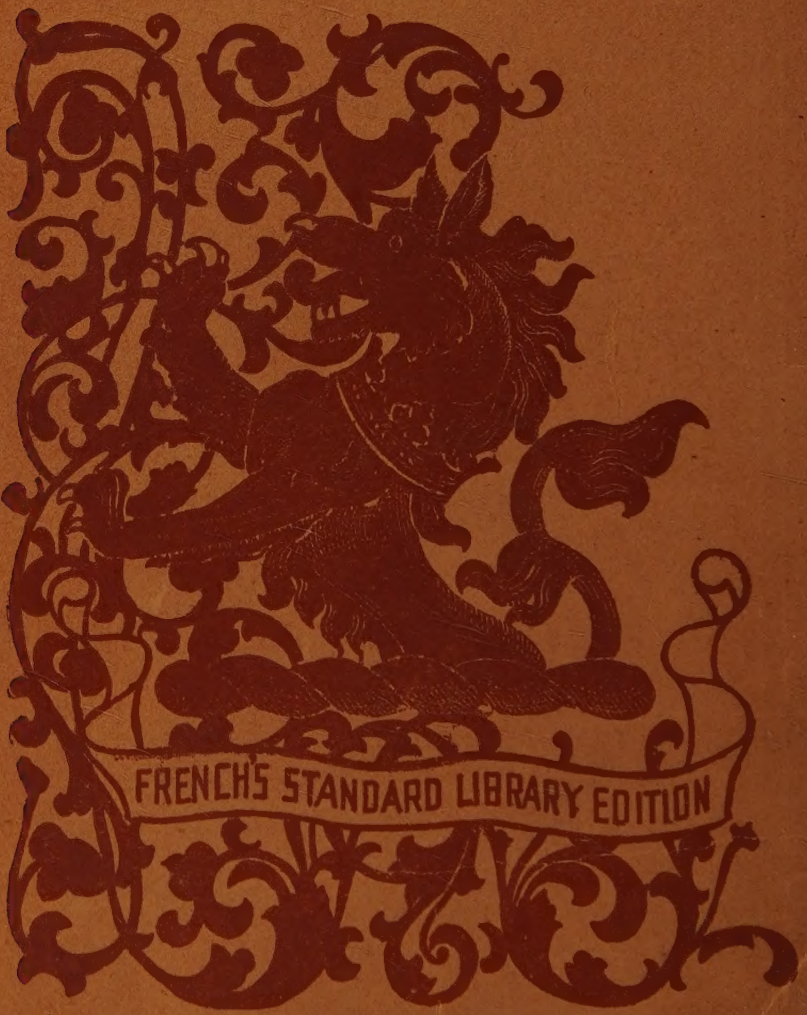

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